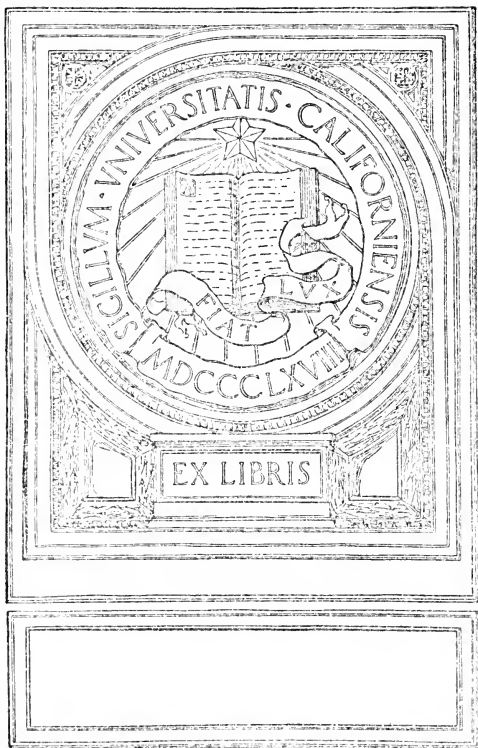


OLD SONGS

AND NEW

Margaret J. Preston







No. 6 26.



# OLD SONG AND NEW.

*Prof. John S. Hart  
with the grateful esteem  
of M. J. P.*

BY

MARGARET J. PRESTON.

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ALBION LIAO





## DEDICATION.

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DAY-DUTY done,—I've idled forth to get  
An hour's light pastime in the shady lanes,  
And here and there have pluckt with careless pains,  
These wayside waifs,—sweet-brier and violet,  
And such like simple things that seemed indeed  
Flowers,—though perhaps, I knew not flower from weed.

What shall I do with them?—They find no place  
In stately vases where magnolias give  
Out sweets in which their faintness could not live:  
Yet tied with grasses, posy-wise, for grace,  
I have no heart to cast them quite away,  
Though their brief bloom should not outlive the day.

Upon the open pages of your book,  
I lay them down:—And if within your eye  
A little tender mist I may descry,  
Or a sweet sunshine flicker in your look,—  
Right happy will I be, though all declare  
No eye but love's could find a violet there.





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## APOLOGY.

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“WHAT right hast *thou* to chirp?”—I asked a bird  
Whose slender trill I caught among the trees,  
Where thousands of full-throated harmonies  
Pulsated on the undulant air, and stirred  
The conscious forest-coverts, till I heard  
The leaves kiss, in their gladness,—while the breeze  
Broadened its wings to waft the melodies  
Far up the west. The twitterer, at my word,  
Paused:—(yet I missed no note:)—“Within the vale  
Are mates of mine,”—he piped—“for whom the lark  
Soars with a song too distant,—yet who love  
My quiet cooings in the leafy dark:  
For *them*,—not *thee*, I fill our nested grove;  
Keep thou thine ear for lark and nightingale!”







FROM HEBREW STORY.



## RUTH IN THE LAND OF MOAB.

### I.

I sit apart bereaven,  
Under the ashen shadows slant, with eyes  
Too utter sorrowful to lift to heaven  
So cruel-bright. Along the path that lies  
Betwixt the fields of barley, to and fro,  
The merry, careless folk do come and go,  
Noisy with harvest mirth,—and I, so sad !  
—I marvel, can it be  
That ever I was light of heart or glad  
As yonder maidens at the well I see  
Filling their pitchers? Woe, ah, woe is me !  
So bitter-sweet the memory of the day  
We met beside the fountain,—he and I,—  
And from my shoulder, or I framed reply,  
He gat the urn, unheeding of my nay.  
So long it seems, since I, as them, was gay,

Smiling at naught ! Now o'er each water-jar,  
Their veils thrown back, I watch them stoop to trace  
Their comeliness of face,  
And laugh with pride to mark how fair they are.

## II.

Within the vineyards near  
Shout the grape-gatherers, and amidst their cheer  
Mingleth the hum of children,—ah, the pain !—  
No more the dances of the harvest-time,  
No more for me the vintage, fill the plain :  
*My* clusters all are mildewed in their prime,—  
My vine is clean uprooted ; sun and rain,  
Sharp and sore bitter in their mockery now,  
Can call the living blossoms from my bough  
Never again !

## III.

I watch the browsing flocks upon the hills,  
And question of myself, if I but dreamed  
What time we twain along the wimpling rills  
Went hand in hand, he whiles, rehearsing tales  
Of his young, innocent age, until, meseemed,  
It he o'erlived in Judah's pleasant vales  
Once more,—a ruddy boy in Bethlehem,  
Shepherding there his father's happy herds :  
And as, attent, I hung upon his words,  
Mindful alone of them,

As close and closer to his side I crept,  
Half-unaware how marvellous-sweet it was,—  
                                Ceasing with sudden pause,  
He oft-times lifted up his voice and wept,—  
Yea, wept by reason of the joy he had,  
And fell in tender-wise upon my breast,  
Making my heart, with loving speech, right glad :  
Anon he raised a heavenward hand and blest  
The God of Jacob for His judgments sent,  
Good wrought of evil,—out of death, fair life,  
Famine and travail, loss and banishment,  
                                That gave him me to wife.

## IV.

Here on this wayside stone,  
Alone as I had never been alone,  
Had love not peopled these thrice-blessed years  
With angels that made sweet the footed hours  
Strewing the path I went, with thick-dropt flowers,—  
I sit astonied—the harsh sackcloth spread  
Above my widow'd head,  
And drink the wine and eat the bread of tears,  
In utmost wrack and bitterness of mind  
That I am left behind.

## V.

I see the olives ripening as of old ;  
The full-grown figs are yellowing in the sun ;  
The wheaten tassel deepens into gold,  
And all is just the same  
To yonder reapers when the day is done,  
As if *he* went and came :  
Who now doth weight the air with Chillion's name ?  
—So must it be,—even so !  
The over-jealous heart must yield, resigned  
To know its dead forgotten, out of mind,—  
Must learn, through grievous hurt, to hide the throe  
Of wounded tenderness. Yon virgin band  
Slow loitering still beside the fountain's curb,  
Heedless as if no spoiler could disturb  
Their light enchantments,—yet must feel the hand  
Of doomed sorrow bow each head in turn ;  
Therefore I drop no wormwood in their wine :  
Enough, if through the strength vouchsafed, they learn  
To bear whatso of ill their lots assign,  
Unsharing aught of mine.

## VI.

Albeit of my distress  
Acquaintance take light note,—yet I, indeed,  
Grieve not therefor : 'tis no unkindly heed.  
Only one life the less

Counted among the kinsfolk ; from the field  
One sower missed ;—amidst the vintage-cheer,  
One merry, lacking voice, this harvest year,—  
One arm the less the pruning-hook to wield,—

And that is all,—is all,

Even to the friends that clave unto him well :  
For me . . . none other losses can befall :—  
With him apart, so had I learned to dwell,  
Hedged in a world that only held us twain,  
Little it mattereth what may hence remain  
Within the smitten, desolate wilderness

Whereof *that life the less*

Made a Damascus garden for my soul.

O lost, lost love !—whose presence filled the whole  
Of my full-laden life,—what marvel, I,  
Emptied of thee, do rend my heart and die !

VII.

And yet,—and yet,—it hath no void, my soul :  
It overflows as Jordan doth his marge  
Wept flush by vernal floods that surge and roll,  
Drowning the troubled pastures with surcharge  
Of turbid waters. Empty ? . . . Grief is strong  
To overcrowd the spirit even as love,  
Leaving no verge for aught in heaven above,  
Or in the earth beneath, it doth not throng  
With its devouring gloom. Yea even, meseems,

The aching piteousness I keep for her,  
The sad-eyed mother from whose forehead beams  
Such hopeless patience, only is the stir  
Of my pathetic memories. She was his,—  
Of all, first kissed, first clung to. On her breast  
The little head was nursed away to rest,  
And therefore best I love her,—therefore 'tis  
I cleave to her, the sole-left, human thing  
For whom I yet entice myself to brave  
The sting of living. Haply I might bring  
Some medicament the bruised hurt to lave,  
Some precious nard to soothe the lonely pain,  
And reconcile her back to life again,—  
That desolate path through which she fares to them,  
Husband and sons,—a path behooven to be  
Sad evermore. Now, empty-handed, she

Returns to Bethlehem:

O joyless exile, what a woe is thine!  
*Can* it out-mete the height and depth of mine?  
—Then love shall lift the burden of that woe;  
Whither thou goest, I will also go,  
And where thou lodgest, there will I abide,  
Thy people shall be mine,—thy God, my guide,—  
Where thou dost die, there will I yield my breath,  
And by thy side my burial-place shall be:  
The Lord do so and more, if aught but death

Part thee and me!



## THE DAUGHTER OF THE GILEADITE.

### I.

THROUGH wage of war the pleasant land was waste ;  
The youth of Israel, man by man, had fallen,  
Till all the valorous Leaders of the Tribes  
Were counted among the slain. The hoary heads  
Melted away like snow on Sannin's top,  
By south winds smitten : and deliverance grew  
A paling hope, as wore the days away.

Yet one stern lesson had the evil taught :  
Astarté could not save ; the priestly groves  
Of Chemosh shrouded lying oracles ;  
The mystic star of Chiun forebore to shine :  
Yea, furthermore,—when they had cried,—one ear  
Only had heard,—one hand been stretcht to help ;  
And hence, in their sore straitness, they had turned  
To seek in Urim and Thummim succor found  
No other whither ; and thenceforth they knew  
The unimag'd YAVEH for their one true God.

So came it then to pass that in their souls  
Remembrance of the former time had place ;

And ancient men made known how Canaan's kings,  
From western border of Zidon, to the marge  
Of Jordan eastward,—from the whiten'd crest  
Of Hermon, set against the northern sky,  
To the far reach of sandy Arabah,  
Trembled before the Lord of Hosts, and fled.

Among the Elders sat there men whose sires  
Were of the brave Three Hundred, who went forth  
With Gideon, when he brake upon the camp  
Of sleeping Midianites,—who spake and said,  
Strengthening each other,—“Wherefore should we fail  
Of such deliverance now? What lets that we  
Call home our banished,—him we drave abroad,—  
Restore the alien to his father's house,  
Right whom we wronged, and cancel thus the wrong  
By gift of leadership, that so he break  
The yoke of bondage wherewithal we groan?”

Forth sped the clamor through the Tribes encamped  
At Mizpeh;—“Call the banished home again!”  
And ever and anon the cry arose,  
Swelling and loudening with each day's acclaim,—  
“Bring home the alien,—call the banished back!”

Then rose the Elders from the gates, and forth  
They gat them over Jordan with their hest,

Saying:—"Come thou with us and be our Head;  
Lead forth the Hosts, and take from this our hand  
Due restitution for all wrong-doing past."

Then questioned Jephthah, counselling with his heart:  
—"And wherefore not? Do I not tire betimes  
Of this wild Lebanon's so narrow bourne,  
And sigh for seemlier spoil than beasts of prey,  
And other abiding-place than cloven crags?  
I would have sovran empire of men,—  
I would have channel for the restless strength  
That beats itself against these fastnesses:  
And vengeance too,—vengeance so utter-keen  
As pierceth sharper than a two-edg'd sword;  
Vengeance that recompenseth years of wrong,  
Not with forgiveness' stint,—that were too small;  
But of such lordly bearing as wreaks itself  
In blessings on the wrong-doer!—I will save  
The land that cast me out,—a goodly land,  
A land of ancient heroes, valorous men,—  
Land of my father's sepulchre,—and of mine,—  
Yea, verily, as my soul doth live,—of mine!"

## II.

A thousand watch-fires shone on Mizpeh's slopes,  
 Where lay a mighty host of harness'd men  
 Waiting the morrow's march. The new-risen moon  
 Above the city swam in silences  
 Of infinite depth that mocked the innumerable stir  
 And tumult of the hour. Behind close walls  
 That hedged a garden, where a fountain's lapse  
 O'erbores the bruit of the uneasy camp,  
 And tempered the hot rush and tramp of feet  
 Along the ways, a maiden watched alone.  
 The air was rich with mingled spiceries,—  
 Citron and aloe, and all dew-drench'd sweets  
 That drowsed the night. Near by, a querulous dove,  
 Through broken dreams, made plaint,—till restless  
                   grown

Of bodeful echo to her own vexed thought,  
 The maiden chiding turned, and heard the voice  
 Of him she had waited long,—“*Zanoné!—Thou!*”  
 And she made haste to answer, and right glad,  
 The twain sat down beneath the cassia trees,  
 And wist not if the cushat cooed or no.

Anon she drew the javelin from its belt,  
 And loosed the helmet's band: “Behold,”—she said,  
 “Thy locks are moist as never Amana's dews

Wet them, when thou hast lain night-long a-top :"  
And in her hollowed palms she bare cool water,  
And laved his brow therewith ;—he answering :  
—"Our life has purpose now to whet true toil,  
That midst our rugged clefts it never knew ;  
And worthier aim than ravin of honeycombs,  
Or branching antlers of the roe-buck slain,  
Or leopard's spotted skin for warmth against  
The biting hoar-frost"—

"Yea,"—Zanoné spake,  
Smoothing her finger on the weapon's edge,  
—"This sharpen'd javelin hath brave work in hand,—  
Its rightful end. Naught can it better essay  
Than smite the heathen-folk that waste the land.  
Such goodlier service have I craved for it,  
Chafing against the woodcraft skill ;—and now,  
Sith that my wish hath answer fashioned to it  
Above my hope,—wherefore ask I for more?  
And yet—and yet, at whiles,"—

But Aran laid  
A hushing hand across the tender mouth,  
Saying—"No word shall fill mine ear to-night  
That is not freighted with a royal hope :  
We needs must hoard all strengthening unguents up,  
Wherewith to medicine heart-aches, while we shun  
As baleful, every bitter herb of fear."

The maiden answered low:—"If he be lost  
 Amid the chance of war,—then what, to me,  
 Kinless, is left?"—"What left?" . . . and Aran spake  
 Wounded,—“O, naught,—naught left: for what am I,  
 Weighed in the balance of love, against a father!”  
 And from the light-girt waist the slacken'd arm  
 Slid down. A troubled glance Zanoné cast  
 Upon the averted face,—then sudden, sprang  
 Closer, and dropped her head upon his breast  
 And gave full way to a great gust of tears.  
 Whereat,—(by reason of one little drop  
 That held a honeyed bitter in its sweet,  
 —The wild-bee's sipping of the poison-cup,)  
 Came such a hurrying rush of passionate speech,  
 As heretofore, in her coy shamefastness,  
 She never had woven in words. And hearing it,  
 Aran could scarce repent him of his heat,  
 Seeing it wrought him largess, else unwon.

Then, after reconciliation had,  
 That made the love it quickened ten-fold sweeter,—  
 “Never before,”—he said—“saw I a fear  
 Whiten this cheek, or dim these steadfast eyes:  
 Or is it the blanching moon? Thus,—thus and thus—  
 I challenge the ruby back! Ha, now the glow,  
 Like the red lip of morn on Shenir's brow,  
 Chaseth the pallor hence. Lift thy dropt eyes,

—Dark, mountain-pools, as Jabbok's—with leave to  
mark

If yet their shaken depths be smooth enow  
To mirror a stooping face." Thus squandering  
Their one last hour in prodigal iterance  
Of love's dear phases and vicissitudes,  
(The tireless story that grew never old,  
Though uttered and uttered o'er a thousand times,)  
One hastened to them, saying,—“Behold,—my master  
Would see his daughter ere he goeth hence.”

They rose and followed. In the inner court  
They found the Chief: and when at his command,  
All had gone forth, Zanoné with swift step  
Sprang to the arms that opened wide to her,  
And fell upon the mailed breast, and wept.

And Jephthah spake: “Approach, my son, and thus  
Receive, ye twain, a blessing from my hand:”  
Whereat, before the mighty man they knelt,  
The maiden and the youth,—and in the name  
Of Isaac's and Rebekah's God, he sought  
For them a wedded life of joy and peace.

## III.

The Hosts of Israel lay beside the fords  
 Of Jordan, tarrying for the embassies  
 That had gone forth to sue the Ammonite  
 With fair entreaty; and often as they sued,  
 Their message had been set at naught, till now  
 The people a-wearied of forbearance. Then,  
 And only then,—(for largest-natured souls  
 Be ever most long-suffering,)—did the Chief  
 Bid set the sacred standards forth, and fling  
 The blood-red banner abroad, by cunning hands  
 Of women broidered with the battle-call,—  
*“The sword of Jephthah and of Gideon!”*

But ere they dipt their feet within the flood,  
 They lifted up with one accord, their voice,  
 And called upon the name of Israel's God.  
 Before the altar ministered ancient priests,  
 Who prayed the Lord of Hosts to lead them forth,  
 Scatter the heathen, break their bow of strength,  
 And give the victory. Jephthah heard, deep-moved;  
 A holy jealousy wrought in his soul;  
 The in-bred loyalty of long-gone years  
 Brake through the barriers exile heaped erewhile,  
 A headlong torrent, that swept clean away  
 All wreck of bitterness,—all choking gorge



Thitherward tided by the surging past,—  
And in the tumult of his hurrying zeal,  
With his right hand up-lift before the Lord  
He sware :—

“If Thou deliver our enemies  
Up to my sword until they be destroyed,  
Even to the uttermost,—then shall it be  
That whatsoever cometh from my doors  
To meet me, when I do return in peace,  
Shall be a whole burnt-offering to the Lord.”

Up rose the solemn smoke of sacrifice,  
Bearing, with rich frankincense consecrate,  
The vow to heaven. The mitred priests bent low ;  
The people shouted with the clash of arms,  
“Amen,—Amen ! So let it be !”

#### IV.

—Strange mirth

Once more went smiling through the long-waste land ;  
And hearts that scarce had ever known a joy,  
Lifted, as lifts the heavy-headed grain

At tidings of the coming of the wind.  
The ancient men for whom all hope had ashened  
Into the piteousness of gray despair  
That nursed no ember of better days to be,—  
Through gladness rent their garments: For had not  
God

In very deed made bare His mighty arm,  
And given the evil haters of His name  
Into His servant's hand?

—The wide-spread plains  
Of Ammon ran with slaughter: Twenty towns  
Unbarred their gates before the conqueror:  
Rabbah had fallen:—the “City of the Waters,”—  
Minnith was taken; widow'd Aroër  
Sat desolate, because her sons were slain.

With songs of triumph,—trumpets braying loud,  
Victorious standards borne aloft,—sheath'd swords  
Girt on their thighs,—hackt bucklers loosened off,  
And heads unhelmeted,—the avenging hosts  
Stood on the Jordan's nether shore again,  
And all, as with strong wine, were drunk with joy.  
Now might the fields their seeded increase yield,—  
The reaper bind his sheaves, safe-girt from harm,—  
The vineyard-clusters ripen as of old,  
And merry tumult fill the olive-groves  
Once more: For all the land had rest from war.

Along the march forth came the Hebrew women  
With solemn dances and ascriptive praise.  
And wilder, as the leagues still lessened, grew  
The gladsomeness, till even the piney hills  
Were moved to laughter, and the trees clapt hands.

“*Mizpeh!*—The Lord *hath* watched betwixt his own,  
And brought us back in peace:”—and Aran sought  
The eye of Jephthah, as who should reply;  
But Jephthah answered not, nor lifted up  
His face to welcome Mizpeh’s towers that shone  
Fair on the horizon’s edge. When lo! a clash  
Of timbrels swam athwart the grassy slopes,  
And silvery voices rose and fell and died;  
Then clearer, nearer swelled most jubilant  
With question and response.

. . . A quick white flutter

Of womanly vesture,—eager arms outstretcht,—  
Unfilleted locks against his breastplate flung,—  
Wide eyes, whereof the heaven was dashed with  
tears,—

Pale-parted lips struck dumb through rush of bliss,—  
He saw,—he knew,—and from the stricken heart  
Of the stout mailed warrior, burst there forth  
A mighty and exceeding bitter cry;

“*My child!—My daughter!—Woe is me—my child!*”

## V.

"She doth not ask,—my lamb of sacrifice,  
 She will not suffer remission of my vow :  
 And I,—Yea, I have sworn before the Lord,  
 And who may disannul? O hateful pride!  
 Maddest ambition!—most accursed greed,  
 That thought to bribe Heaven thus, and so to be  
 Accepted thus! Would God that I had died  
 An alien,—seeing my native land no more!  
 Would God, some bow, at venture drawn, had slain  
                     me,

And I had never beholden her face again!

"My tender dove,—my one sweet comforter,—  
 Laid youngling on mine empty heart, that else  
 Had crazed and broken itself above my dead!  
 And day-long, how she close and closer crept  
 Into the darken'd, shivering, frozen void,  
 Till it waxed warm, anon, with human love!  
 How hath she cheered my cruel banishment,—  
 Mossed the sharp flints with soft observances,—  
 Made of my goat-skin tent a pastoral home,—  
 Soothed when I chode, and kept within my soul  
 The wholesome fear of God! How did her wiles  
 Cheat me of ruth, and win me oft aside  
 From vengeful aims and angry discontents;—  
 And this,—ah, woe!—*is* this the end of all?

“Zanoné,—my one child!—I thought to see  
Thee stand at Aran’s side, an honored wife,—  
To lift my head and proudly say,—‘My son!’  
And count the easeful, happy years go by,  
When thy fair boys, like oaks on Lebanon,  
Should overtop thy height,—alas, the day!  
The strong man’s arm is as a stubble-stalk,  
And his stout will, as a bowed bulrush, yields.  
My spirit is smitten: How can I give thee up,  
My beautiful? Thou God of Abraham,  
Wilt Thou naught else?—Is there none other victim?  
No hallowed firstling on whose innocent head  
I dare devolve my vow, and hear Thee say,  
‘Lo I accept thy ransom?’ Thou art strong,  
And I am weak:—O, woe is me!—my child!”

## VI.

The weeks of wail had worn unto their verge;  
And now within a grove of cypress glooms,  
Apart from the companions of her woe,  
Zanoné stood,—fixéd and white,—fast held  
With stress of agony in Aran’s arms.

The sun athwart them shed his setting gleams,  
Red as the sacrificial flame ;—his gleams  
Whose latest must mark their hour of parting come.  
By reason of anguish was the youth's strong frame  
Shrunk ; his tongue essayed delirious words,  
Wild, void of meaning and direful. But for her,  
The vestal in her consecrated calm,  
Over whose soul the swallowing sea had gone  
And left her wrecked of all, save awestruck faith  
And love that overleaps the grave,—the strife  
Was ended. On her straitened lips, a smile  
Saintly as death's, lingered as loth to go :  
Light, strange, ineffable, shone in her eyes  
Like the Shekinah's glory ; and her words  
Came loftily, with firm, unbroken voice,  
As Miriam's song on the red shore of triumph.  
“ Now we let go for ever earthly hands,—  
Now tear our twinéd souls apart, and hence  
Look to the meeting in the Canaan yonder !  
O love,—make sure of this :—Dost thou not know  
That fatherly pity filleth the Highest's heart ?  
Then learn it from me : In silence of the night,  
Among the reaches of these mournful vales,  
A spirit bare inward to my listening sense  
This heaven-sent truth :—‘ Ye do not part for aye :’  
By it I hold for solace in my woe :  
Do thou likewise the same. Cling to that faith,—

Bind it, beseech thee, o'er the fiery pain  
That else will burn thy tender heart to ashes.

“And now my soul doth lift itself to bless  
Thy crowning love,—love that hath given to me  
Sovereignty dearer than a sceptred queen's.  
O strangest, sweetest love!—O bitterest love!  
I die to think on it:—no more,—no more!  
No backward look! Yet know thou, for a truth,  
That in my Holy of Holies, Memory  
Hath laid up in her golden manna-pot  
Our earthly loves,—unwasting, pure for ever!

“I dare not weep: I find no place for tears:  
I am the accepted sacrifice to God,  
Devoted, set apart henceforth to Him.  
Promoted to such honor, who am I  
To murmur at the costly offering?  
I save my country: Thou would'st dare the death—  
Yea, thou *hast* dared it, facing of the foe,  
For such a reason full oft. My poor, lost name!  
Let it not perish out of Israel:  
But when the land is rich in peaceful homes,  
And blessedness of husband, wife and child,  
Would they might keep some mindfulness of one  
Whose hopes were all foregone! Would they might  
teach,—

These happy mothers—teach their little ones,  
 With pitiful lips to say it,—‘*Poor Zanoné!*’  
 And O my father! But thou wilt be both,  
 Daughter and son to him, yea, twain in one;  
 The strength, the will to shield,—that shall be thine,  
 The watchfulness of unforgetting love  
 That never sleeps,—that shall be mine,—through thee.

“Behold,—behold! The latest reddening ray  
 Ashens behind yon Gileaditish hills,—  
 Those peaceful, peaceful hills!—O love, my love!  
 So! . . . let me crowd the travail of my soul  
 Into this kiss,—divinest of my life;  
 And kneel thou, while I lay on thy dear head  
 Once more my hands,—this once, once more—and  
     pray:  
 Jehovah bless and keep thee: The Lord God  
 Be very gracious unto thee,—lift up  
 On thee His glorious countenance, Belovéd,  
 And give thee peace.”



## THE GRIEF OF BATHSHEBA.

### I.

My little one,—my innocent nursing child,  
That wottest not of evil!—that hast been  
Thy mother's one requital in her sin,  
Making it tolerable,—my undefiled,  
Must *thou* die *for* me? O my God, my God!  
Since mine the trespass, mine the suffering too!

Lay Thou Thy rod

Of righteous scourging on my guilty flesh,  
Till my transgression tortures me anew,  
And all my half-healed wounds do bleed afresh:  
But spare,—Thou Just One!—spare this guiltless lamb  
Who crazeth me with his perplexéd eyes,  
That question,—“Wherefore thus?” Behold, *I* am  
Sole cause and sore, my spotless sacrifice!

### II.

—The same,—ah me! the same,—  
That piteous, helpless, mute-appealing look,  
That oft hath sent a shudder through my frame,  
When to the brazen altar-foot I took

A kid for my oblation. Can I lay  
Naught on that altar now that will suffice?  
Are flocks of Kedar vain to wash away  
The shame I weep for? Is there other price  
Wherewith my soul may purchase its release,  
And go in peace,  
Cleansed, pardoned and accepted, O Most High?  
—Or must I bring  
This one-year suckling as sin-offering?  
Nay, then,—far rather, dying, let me die!

## III.

—How could I dare  
To lift in Paradise, mine eyes to his,  
If he, mine unoffending one, were 'ware  
That she who held God's place to him,—through this  
Her bitter wrong, had robbed him of the throne,—  
My princely child,—that else had been his own?

## IV.

—If I might only die  
In thy soul's stead, and thou, unhurt go free!  
O prayer, how vain!—the lot hath fallen on thee:  
Yet might the grief be borne, methinks, if I  
Could hear thy wordless tongue once frame "*forgiven*:"

But if not here,—not here,  
It falleth ever on mine aching ear,  
Speak *that* word, first of all, to me in heaven!

## v.

Mine innocent, baby-child,—  
It grieves thy lip to mark my look of woe:  
Thou canst not know it here, thou need'st not know  
Wherefore thy mother's mouth so seldom smiled.  
*She* knew thou wast but lent; *that* word was sure:  
And never across thy rounded cheek hath passed  
An ivory pallor, though it might endure  
The fleetest moment, but a molten fear  
Caught at her heart,—“the hour—the hour, at last!”  
Yet when I looked not for it, it was here;  
Yea—it *is* here!—Behold . . .  
His fingers tighten . . . See, I cannot wring  
Mine from their clasp;—his forehead is a-cold,—  
The King,—haste, fetch the King!

## THE CHOICE OF BARZILLAI.

### I.

Now blesséd be for evermore  
The God of Jacob, who hath turned  
Aside the jealous wrath that burned  
Against our Lord the King, and o'er  
The plotters of his fall hath poured  
His awful vengeance like a flame  
Of all-devouring fire;—His name  
Who wrought deliverance, be adored!

### II.

But humble with no gifts' reward,  
Thy servant for light favor lent,  
In this the grievous banishment  
Wherewith the abjects vex my lord.  
I did but offer bread and wine,  
And slaughtered sheep and milk of kine,  
Of my abundance, to the host  
Fainting for lack of meat. Bestow,  
Beseech thee, that I crave the most,—  
Thy royal blessing ere thou go.

## III.

Nor seek not I should turn aside  
From these my fathers' ancient fields,  
The land that store of plenty yields,  
The pastures where my flocks abide,  
The jagged rocks along whose edge  
My youth hath chased the wild-goat oft,  
These vales within whose reedy sedge  
I've heard the turtle cooing soft:—

## IV.

The tents where dear my kindred dwell,  
The brook whereof athirst I drank,  
And made my bed upon its bank;  
The coolness of yon shaded well,  
Where, at the noontide's waxing hot,  
We drave the herds for watering;  
It seemeth but a little thing,  
Yet, good my Lord,—entreat me not!

## V.

Thy servant hath no heart to cross  
This Jordan; brief and evil be  
The days laid up in store for me,  
And what account were gain or loss?  
Life weareth to its bourne, and I,  
Infirm of step, beset by fears,

And with the weight of fourscore years  
Burdened and bent, draw near to die.

## VI.

To senses that be dulled or dead,  
Or can discern nor good nor ill,  
Though fair I know my Gilead still,—  
Doth aught avail of fairness spread?  
What now to me the dainty meats?  
What Mahanäim's choicest wine,  
Or baskets heaped from Sibmah's vine,  
Or far Rogélim's gathered sweets?

## VII.

Within the porches of mine ear,  
The voice of singing-women throngs  
Confusedly. Even though I trod  
The sacred courts, and stood a-near  
Within the holy hill of God,—  
The altar services, the songs,  
The chanting priests I should not hear.

## VIII.

Then let thy servant find, I pray,  
Grace in thy sight, nor seek to bring  
A burdening charge upon the King,  
And get thou on thy royal way.

Among my kindred have I dwelt,  
Among my kindred would I die,  
With ancient neighbors waiting nigh,  
Whose heart with year-long grief will melt.  
My people's sepulchres I crave  
For burial-place: I would be laid  
By the lign-aloe trees that shade  
My father's and my mother's grave.

MICHAL.

I.

NAAMAH.

Sweet Princess,—shadows on thy brow again?  
We, thy companions, sigh to see thee sad.

MICHAL.

Have I not reason? Mark yon purple blot  
Of darkness dropt upon the summer blue  
Of Ephraim's peak; thereby thou well mayst know,  
Sparing an upward look, that overhead  
Drifteth a cloud. Even so upon my spirit  
Lieth the blotting shadow. Thou hast heard,—

NAAMAH.

Yea, somewhat: but beseech thee, stay thy heart;  
As heretofore, the dæmon will pass away.

MICHAL.

Would I dare venture where he broods withdrawn,



Amazed and dumb, within the shuddering dark,  
And make him know the touch of helpful hands,  
And speak some word for soothing,—my dear father!

NAAMAH.

It were not best;—pray thee put by the thought:  
For stouter hearts than thine have shrunk to mark  
The inward throes by which his strength is shorn.

MICHAL.

He beareth all the people on his heart,  
And needs must stagger with the mighty weight:  
The coil of sovereignty doth bind his brows  
So straitly they are crazed; for I do hold  
No memory of such evil moods what time  
We dwelt in pastoral peace among the hills.

NAAMAH.

What marvel war hath overwrought him thus?  
The hungriest lion on Bethalga's steep  
Crouching to watch the folds, were sportive prey  
Beside this Zobah and these heathen Kings,  
And all the swarming Children of the East.  
Yet better so than the obscure estate,—  
The grapple with the fiend,—so power be in it,  
Than levels of sultry calm. Thinks't thou not so?

## MICHAL.

Nay, verily!—For oft at sunset-tide,  
When maidens, poising on their happy heads  
Their baskets reddened with the bleeding grapes,  
Come trooping home; or when at dawn I catch  
The early whistle of the harvest-lads  
Among the barley-swathes,—how the old times  
With longing seize me, and I pine to reave  
Aside these gauds that overmuch oppress,  
And be that blithest of human things, a child!  
Such joy it was to dance with all the rest,  
No dignities disallowing, midst the vines;  
To frolic with the kids at folding-time,  
To tumble the stretcht linen's bleaching webs,  
Or with my brothers shred the olives down,  
Or follow where the shepherds led the flock  
To browse upon the aftermath. No songs,  
No laughter now, no mirthfulness, methinks,  
Rings with a tittle of the dizzy joy  
My childhood knew. And yet I own, withal,  
Amends,—marking my father's topping height  
As royally tower amid the Tribes as ever  
Aforetime in our little Benjamin:  
Albeit for love of him, my soul is sad.  
One told how minstrelsy had chased his gloom;  
Whence came the singer?

NAAMAH.

He is one of those  
Searched out for his good gifts, by the lord Abner;  
Well skilled to twist the melodies perplex  
Among the harp-strings, into fibrous chants  
That draw men's souls out—

MICHAL.

Would he held the power  
To bid the spirit of evil shrink abashed,  
As ghosts at touch of dawn:

NAAMAH.

Ay, verily,  
'Tis said he hath such charm—

MICHAL.

As spirits obey?  
A spell to fright the fiend?—O better far  
Than rarest skill of shepherd's reedy craft!

NAAMAH.

Yea, both are his,—the strength, the sweetness also.  
Would that thy listening ear, three days ago,  
Had heard the Virgin-song,—the 'Alamoth,'  
Whose fluty richness ravishes the sense  
Like quick, thick bird-notes dropt straight out of heaven!

Or that devout and holy cantillation  
That caused the thunder-rack on the King's brow  
To empty itself in tears, whereof the flow  
Made all his shriveling powers up-lift—

MICHAL.

—Thou, then  
Hast heard the stripling?

NAAMAH.

Stripling!—he is tall  
Even as thy princely brother, and his face  
Hath the clear splendor of the breaking morn.  
Methinks amid the youths of Israel,  
For comeliness, no form can mate with his;  
And in his sheathéd eye is covert fire,  
That only waits the breath of sacred song,  
To make it gleam as Samuel's, when at Ramah  
He prophesies before the Oracle.

MICHAL.

Thy over-praise hath stirred a wish to know  
Whence comes the secret of this marvelous player.

NAAMAH.

And wherefore not? It may be easy compassed:  
Behind the curtains thou mayst sit unseen,

And so make proof, when next the King doth call him,  
Even for thyself, of this his mastership.

## II.

SAUL.

Not yet,—my soul not yet hath clean escaped  
The pangs wherewith the fiend hath holden me clutched:  
Abner, attest me,—witness that my spirit  
Never hath cowered before a mortal foe;  
Of old thou so hast often proven it—

ABNER.

Yea,

My Lord, O King; the arm of Joshua struck  
None mightier blows at Ajalon than thine  
Hath dealt to Amalek till he is destroyed.  
What canst thou more? Thy latest enemy  
Yields, vanquished now.

SAUL.

—The latest?—nay, the latest  
Here in my breast wageth such perilous strife  
That I am shamed, and crave thy testimony  
That not the terrible hordes of Philistines  
Stinging like madden'd bees, prevailed against me

As thou hast seen the speechless terror prevail  
What time the abhorréd dæmon buffeted.

ABNER.

My Lord, thou ever hast gotten the victory;  
And even now the look of kingship comes  
Back to thy brow, just as aforetime.

SAUL.

Nay—

This loathéd gloom—it hangs about my strength  
And drags me down, as once on shaggy Seir  
A lion's whelp sprang on me from his lair,  
Amid so swart a darkness I could find  
Naught of the weapons ungirded from my side.  
Would God 'twere only as a lion's whelp!  
My boasted strength! Behold this shrunken arm,  
That once could dent the seven-fold bosséd shield,  
Or snap a bundle of ashen spears like straw,  
Or hold the unbridled colt in wildest plunge,  
Behold it now with unaverted face.  
But nay,—I scorn thy pity. O, my friend,  
Thou darest not pity! And yet the man who never  
Before stark flesh hath quailed,—whose steel-like thews  
Have craved the joy of peril,—may unashamed  
Shiver when spirits do brave him.

ABNER.

Pray thee bid

Into thy presence, O King, the youth whose song  
At other times hath wrought deliverance  
When thou wert vexed and sore distraught of soul.

SAUL.

The lad whose hale, wind-brighten'd face hath in it  
The morning crispness of Mount Ephraim?  
Nay . . . As thou wilt . . . I care not: what avails?

DAVID ENTERS.

Look ye,—I am o'erworn,—ready to perish  
For lack of that thou keepest a surfeit of,  
Heart-quiet, untroubled peace: Boy, at thy peril,  
Rant not of battle-fields, nor warriors' shouts,  
Nor aught that hints the turbulence of life:  
Away with these! Give me some cricket-chirp,  
Or creak of wain, or beat of busy flail,—  
Aught that will deaden the viper's hiss:—dost hear?

DAVID SINGS.

I.

Mine eyes I will lift to the hills  
Whence cometh mine aid;  
The Lord all my counsel fulfils,  
Who the earth and the heavens hath made.

## II.

No whither thy footsteps shall go  
But still He will keep;  
The watcher of Israel,—lo!  
He neither shall slumber nor sleep.

## III.

The Lord is thy shade—is thy stay,  
On thy left hand, thy right;  
The sun shall not smite thee by day,  
The moon shall not hurt thee by night.

## IV.

The Lord shall preserve thee from ill,  
Thy comforts restore:  
—Out-going and in-coming, He will  
Uphold thee henceforth evermore!

## SAUL.

Hath the boy magic hidden in his touch?  
Abner, the reaching voice, like a cool hand,  
Gropes through the smothering darkness,—feels for mine,  
And leads me back,—back to the bleat of lambs,  
And lowing herds among the thymy hills;  
The beautiful hills from whence doth come mine aid!  
Ha, the air clears: I draw free breath again,



As if I clomb some farthest misty peak,  
And gazed sheer downward to the Hinder Sea:  
My happy hills!—my calm, perpetual hills!  
Lo, the old fervor surges through my soul;  
I am the Lord's anointed: Verily,  
As my soul liveth, I do feel the might  
That took my spirit, whenas at Tabor's foot  
I felt the prophet's in-breathed mystery.  
Haste,—bid my servants bring my mightiest sword  
Glittering and sharp, and gird it on my thigh:  
Over my shoulders lay the lordly robe  
And let me walk abroad in sight of men,  
And make them know me for a King once more!

## III.

## MICHAL.

—Comely to see; ay, she did speak true words,  
The garrulous girl; for never in Benjamin  
Saw I his mate for stately-statured grace:  
That up-lift brow, white as a cygnet's breast;  
That stag-like mien, erect before the King  
As he were royal too; that tameless port,  
So unafraid, yet sweet with courteousness

Born only of courts: How could I deem him bred  
Obscure among the sheep-cotes? Ah, my pride!  
*He* might make answer,—‘Have thou care, my princess,  
Or ere I challenge thy count of dynasties  
That lose their reckoning in the far-off Kish!’  
—Merab, my sister, did she hear my taunt,  
Would frown reproof on such disloyalty.  
To her, the state: to me the memories,  
The simple memories, of my simple life,—  
Of conies hunted in the new-reaped fields,  
Of gamesome hidings on the threshing-floors,  
And all the pleasure of the harvest-feast:  
O joys too full!—beyond a princess’ reach!

Those tender canticles! Their breath is sweet  
As odors of the evening-sacrifice:  
They bore me up, as when the Prophet’s voice  
Before the door-place of the Tabernacle  
Uttereth the solemn benediction. Yet  
This voice that hath a lapse as Kishon’s flow,  
And whisperings softer than Beth-nimrah’s reeds,  
Hides slumbering mastery in its unused power.  
The peaceful shepherd’s staff and scrip . . . Go to!  
Helmet and spear and shield for such as he!  
The King doth love him; he will come to honor;  
Naught lacketh he save opportunity;  
And opportunity, to noble souls,

Is but fair leave to flower the golden core  
Of nature out ; and peradventure such  
The shiftings of these troublous times may fetch him.

## IV.

NAAMAH.

Who goeth forth,—so runneth the proclamation,—  
To meet this Canaanitish champion,  
And in the fateful combat overcomes,  
Shall have to wife the daughter of the King,  
His eldest born—

MICHAL.

O, bless thee for the word,—  
His *eldest* ! Joy I pray it bear my sister,  
If haply one among the valiantest  
Of Heads of Tribes in Judah dares the proof  
For getting of such guerdon.

NAAMAH.

Nay, I wot of  
Some fairer-faced, of whom the approving smile

Should be the tempting crown held forth to bind  
Right fittingly the brows of high endeavor.

## MICHAL.

An archer's lure ! I tell thee I hold my state  
A sanctuary,—not a guardless target set  
Whereby to wage and measure trial of skill.  
Commend my sister to the feathered chance,  
And God forbend, no son of Belial win,—  
As well may hap,—out-arowing all the Princes !  
For who that farthest tracks the ravening wolves,  
(Nurtured in danger on rough mountain-sides)  
The hunter of the iron hand and heart,  
—Why seest thou not how such may bear away  
The lily-wreath upon his spear's point, rather  
Than one of the great lords ? Out on the bribe !  
'Tis all unworthy of my noble father.

## NAAMAH.

Beseech thee grace ; and yet, meseems, thou ratest  
Too low the prowess of our royal Tribes,  
Matching their well-proven nobleness against  
Such bulls of Bashan. Think'st thou not, defiance  
Like this must needs arouse the princeliest  
And fire their souls with wrathful emulation ?  
Only fine natures nurse the great resolve,  
And dare all peril for safety of the right.

That chrysopras upon thy jewel'd wrist,  
On its clear surface holds the signet fast,  
Which never Egyptian lapidary cut,  
With all his craft, thus sharp on common amber.  
The tallest palms bear ever the delicate dates:  
Fruited pomegranates stand, the brambles crawl.

MICHAL.

Well, be she free, my sister,—free to risk  
Signet of amber, or wild tamarisks;  
No let would I, if it content her so.

NAAMAH.

Yet hands there be that thrid at need the harp,  
Can also draw the arrow to its head  
With cunning aim; and there be tongues, moreover,  
That seem but moved to praise the Lord withal,  
Can nevertheless shriek out the battle-cry  
Madly as any.

MICHAL.

I would thy jestings ceased:  
Such idle parlance mated with the times  
We plucked the reddened berries in the vales,  
Holding one basket: Now thou dost companion  
A Princess:—Nay, I meant no hurt, Naāmah;  
Perchance I did invite thy frowardness:

Let pass . . . Beshrew, nathless, the hap thou tellest,  
That calleth the minstrel from the court away,  
Leaving some stripling Benjamite to be  
King's armor-bearer, when the hour is ripe  
And waits the action's gathering of it . . . Not so,—  
Not as the champion of the Tribes:—yet haply,  
Scope had been found for some exalted deed,  
Herald of such achievement as may win  
Glory for Israel in the future days.  
Say'st thou his father summoned? Then did he well  
To go, and win the blessing of obedience.

## V.

## SINGING WOMEN.

## I.

Praise ye the Lord most High  
With voice of psalms;  
Let incense cloud the sky,  
And smoke of lambs:  
Let the green earth reply  
With waving palms!

## II.

Daughters of Zorah, bow  
In anguish sore :  
Fair Gerar, wrap thy brow  
With sackcloth o'er :  
Thy warriors, Ekron, thou  
Shalt greet no more !

## III.

Low lieth thy mighty boast,  
The vultures' prey :  
Thy heaven-defying host  
Our God doth slay,  
And to their utmost coast  
Drive clean away.

## IV.

Let cymbals clang again  
With glad accord ;  
—Saul hath his thousands slain ;  
David's ten thousands stain  
With slaughter hill and plain,—  
High sound the loud Amen ;  
Praise ye the Lord !

## ATTENDANT.

Hearken, sweet Princess! From the casement lean,  
And thou may'st catch the joyful 'chants of women,  
The clash of tabrets and the shriek of pipes,  
The acclamation,—Hear it, hear it now!  
—They praise the son of Jesse, even he  
That turned the battle: 'Saul hath slain his thousands,  
David his tens of thousands'—

## MICHAL.

Yea, enow,—  
Hence, all of ye! I hear it best alone.

*[Attendants Depart.]*

My heart,—my heart! That *she* should win the prize  
Reckoned such evil augury, to her thought!  
O, what to her the breathing melodies  
At eventide? the holy Sabbath psalms?  
The solemn ecstasy of Paschal-Feasts?  
What those divinest pantings of a love  
That breaks itself upon the strings, that so  
They moan disconsolate, as with human wail?  
—*She* courts oblivion of her lineage low,  
And holds her state as queenly-wise as though  
She were the daughter of a score of Kings.  
And now,—why she will curse her lot, and chafe  
To call to mind the pebbles and the sling,—



Hints of the base condition of her lord.  
By gracious serviceableness that hideth power,  
She will not strive to win resistless way,  
Sweet of the winning, to that pathetic soul,  
And deal out solace at need. . . Thou God in heaven !  
Is this far world so little in Thy sight,  
And mak'st Thou of Thy creatures such small account,  
Thou dost regard not how all goeth awry ?  
—Should he as son-in-law unto the King,  
Make commerce of his affluent circumstance,  
And get him power, not for *his* sake,—not his,  
Will be the vantage prized ; but that she thus  
May balsam her fretted heart. I—I, meanwhile . . .  
But peace, thou puling soul ! Bethink thyself,  
And emulate the pride thou darest decry :  
Stand up, King's daughter ! At the least, be strong  
Enow to hold in stately fealty  
These traitorous discontents that verily  
Do even imperil woman more than princess.

## VI.

## DAVID.

—From mine own mouth the King thy father, learned it:  
And answer made he quick, as though the thought  
Had not been alien to his royal mind.  
Since for thy sister, he chooseth otherwise,  
Blesséd be God therefor, for evermore!  
—Yet not through wanton vanity, nor to fill  
All ears in Israel with my nameless name,  
And so uplift upon a deed's renown  
My father's house in Judah,—not to dare  
Service for mine anointed King for thrall  
Only of service; nor through appetite  
Of an allegiance over-flusht and swollen;  
Nay, nor for *thy* sake, Michal,—even for thine,  
(Since I am holden to the utter truth  
Nor tremble, lest it minish aught thy love,)  
—For none of these, came it to pass, that I,  
With arrogance unseemly in such years,  
Fronted the champion who defied our hosts.  
One passion swayed, unmingled, mastering, pure,  
And overcame me,—fierce, consuming zeal  
For the down-trodden honor of that Name  
In whom all Israel trusts, that reverent Name  
I speak on bended knee,—The Lord Jehovah.

—Glad,—art thou,—that no lesser motive urged?  
Yea, sweet!—Who best loves Him, will best love thee.

Not all the might of this my single arm,  
Not sense of right-doing, girding me within,  
Not the trained uses of my field-bred craft,  
Got me the victory. Even as a pebble,  
Weak instrument of vengeance in His hand,  
The Lord did hurl me, and the mighty foe  
Fell slain thereby.

But, peradventure thou  
Hast thoughts of other conquest in thy heart:  
And crav'st to know the fashion of its on-going.  
Oft sitting on the daïs, what times the King  
Had me in presence that my minstrelsy  
Might chase the spirit of evil from his mind,  
I caught dim visions of a coiféd head  
That bent and listened, behind the wind-waft screen.  
So day by day I watched thy coming, still  
Tracing thy tender shadow out against  
The filmy hangings; side-way drooping face,  
Hands held in earnest clasp, and forward reach  
Of attitude attent. When I could draw  
Forth strains that wrought right marvellously, I felt  
It was by reason of thy presence nigh,  
That made my heart leap merrily, as with wine.  
And when the odorous rustle of thy garments

Told 'thou hadst passed,—the spiriting charm went too ;  
And on the instant all my strings waxed shrill,  
As if the envious noon had drawn a-near  
And stolen their delicate secret quite away.

And now . . . yea, flush, fair cheek, whereof the bloom  
May shame the sunned pomegranate,—I do know,  
That as a fragrant flagon kept untasted,  
Thy virgin heart hath kept the wine of love  
For slaking of my thirst with a refreshment  
Purer, more infinite-sweet than Bethlehem's well.

## THE ROYAL PREACHER.

### I.

REMEMBER thy Creator :—not when snow

Whiter than Hermon's settleth on thy brow ;  
Not when thy feeble footstep tottereth slow,  
That once was wont to bound as Bether's roe,  
Scorning the hunter's snare,—but even now,—

Now in thy days of youth, when memory  
And mind and purpose yield as doth the stem  
Of a two-summer'd palm-tree :—give to them

The keeping of that wisdom which will be  
Hard of the getting, if thou bide the hour  
Till stiffening age shall mock thy waning power,  
—Before the evil days be come, or years

Draw nigh when thou, benumbed of soul, shalt say,  
“I find no pleasure in them,—naught but tears,  
For, verily, memory's self doth slip away !”

### II.

While all is glad about thee,—while the sun  
Or moon or stars above be darkened not ;

Before thy fainting noontide waxeth hot,  
And in the east thy morn is just begun,  
Remember Him who made thee. In the day  
Of lightsome youth, the clouds about the heart  
That notwithstanding gather,—quickly part,  
And leave clear shining when they melt away.  
But for the sad old man, the sunset ray  
Is briefly kindled: Though the storm be past,  
Behind, the cleaving murk and mist remain;  
The watery gleam of promise doth not last,—  
The clouds return again *after* the rain!

## III.

Then all whereon thy trust was fixed, shall fail;  
The boasted keepers of thy house of clay  
Shall tremble,—the stout limbs that were thy stay,  
Like strong men vanquished, bow themselves and quail  
For very helplessness,—thy comforts cease  
To soothe as heretofore,—the comely grace  
Now fair to see, be wasted from thy face,—  
Even to thyself betokening sure release.  
The soul that through the lattice of thine eye,  
Looked forth with broadened vision, hence shall mark  
A growing dimness creeping up the sky,  
And sigh by reason of the coming dark.

## IV.

The doors aforetime wide-set to the throng,  
Inviting joyous entrance, then shall be  
Shut in the streets; and strange will sound to thee  
The madness and the mirth that crowd along.  
The night will bring thee slumber without rest;  
And ere the earliest bird hath left its nest  
To hail the day-spring, thou wilt watch for dawn,  
And marvel it should crawl so slowly on,  
Only to say—"Would God the hours were o'er!"  
Thy world shall sink to silence:—voices dear  
Die out to wordless murmurs in thine ear,  
And music's soft delights shall charm no more.

## V.

Thy heart shall vex itself with nameless fears,  
Seeing the strength that stood thy stead is gone,  
And there is left no staff to lean upon,  
Along the footway of the dusking years.  
White as the blossoms which the almond-tree  
Above its bald and leafless branches bears,  
Shall be the whiteness of thy thinning hairs.  
The very cricket in the grass shall be  
A burden to thy flesh. Desire shall fail;  
Beauty and grace and passion, naught avail

To stir thy palsied senses. Then shall come  
The end of all,—to still the low-sunk pain :  
—Neighbors shall bear thee to thy last long home,  
And through the streets shall wend the mournful train.

## VI.

Or ever the mysterious silver cord  
Be loosed that to the body binds the soul,  
Or ever broken be the golden bowl  
Wherein the water of our life is stored,  
Or at the fount the pitcher break that bears  
Our daily draught up, or the wheel, around  
Which all the mystic coils of sense are wound,  
Be stopped beside the cistern unawares,—  
Then shall the dust return to earth again,  
As once it was, and mingle with its clod,—  
Then shall the spirit, set free from every chain  
Wherewith the flesh had bound it,—go to God.  
For this the reckoned sum of all shall be,—  
That childhood, youth and age are vanity.



## THE LAMENT OF JOAB.

SNATCHED from the onward rush of trampling feet,  
His harness yet ungirt, and his round cheek  
Pressing a dinted shield,—lay Asahel,  
The boast of Judah,—Bethlehem's youngest Chief,  
Of whom the deeds of valor made harvest-songs  
Wherewith the reapers cheered their noontide rest.  
Scarcely sufficed the mantle about him cast,  
To hide the death-stab; and the bloody ooze  
Was staining the trampled grass.

Hot from pursuit,  
And flushed with such a rage as yet had spared  
Within his soul no silence quiet enough  
For sorrow, Joab bade the host aside:  
And then the Captain of an hundred fights,  
Within whose bosom none made sure that even  
One healthful human spot was left unseared  
By scathe of war,—fell prone with grief and wail.

—“Alas, my brother! Like a netted bird  
That thou should'st perish, and thy cunning spear

Trail in the dust with none avenging blow,—  
Alas, alas, my brother !

“ ‘ God’s creature ’—thus we named thee in our pride,  
So goodly wert thou, stout of heart and limb,  
So fenced about with princely gift and grace,  
Alas, alas, my brother !

“ The wingéd feet that left the roe behind—  
Tracked the gier-eagle home,—stretched to the goal  
Ever the first,—now moveless, stony-still :  
Alas, alas, my brother !

“ Behind the lattice-screen our Mother sits  
Bemoaning thee, with breathless questionings thrust,  
Of battle-tidings, at the passers-by :  
Alas, alas, my brother !

“ We bear thee back this night across the plain  
Where yesternoon thou boundedst like a stag,  
And lay thee dead, for answer, at her feet :  
Alas, alas, my mother !

“ Was it for this she nursed the unfathered boy  
Through joyless days of desolate widowhood ?  
Through lone, unholpen griefs,—only for this ?  
Alas, alas, my brother !

“Thy sun gone down at noon,—thy life unlived,—  
Thy purpose broken off,—thy hopes plucked up,—  
Thy share in youth’s good heritage foregone :

I weep, I weep, my brother !

“Now when the land is all astir through strife,  
When high deeds beckon, and hot bosoms throb,—  
To lay thee in the noisome sepulchre ! . . .

Ah, woe is me, my brother !”

## THE WRITING OF THE KING.

### A PARAPHRASE.

I SAID, what time my fears  
Beheld the cutting asunder of my day,  
—In through the gates of death I go my way,  
And leave behind the remnant of my years.

I said, I shall not see  
My Lord within the land of living men,  
Nor earth's inhabitants behold again,  
Nor all the mighty things that are to be.

Mine age is borne away  
Even as a shepherd's tent from pasture-lands,  
Or severed like the weaver's finished bands,  
Through pining sicknesses and slow decay.

I count the hours till morn  
When as a lion springing in his strength  
To crush his prey, Thou'lt make an end at length;  
And like a crane or swallow, I moan forlorn.

No cushat's note could be  
Sadder than mine,—more filled with utter wail:  
Through looking upward, lo! mine eyelids fail;  
I am oppressed; Lord, undertake for me!

'Thou shalt once more be whole:'  
He surely spake!—I heard it through my tears:  
'Tis He hath done it: Softly all my years  
Now shall I go in lowliness of soul.

My Lord, I live!—Thou hast  
Revived my spirit: Thy recovering breath  
Hath snatched me from the loathsome pit of death,  
And Thou behind Thy back my sins hast cast.

The grave, it cannot praise,  
Death cannot celebrate Thy majesty;  
The living, yea, the living unto Thee,  
As I this day, a thankful voice shall raise.

They shall rehearse it o'er,  
Father to son,—the mercy shown the King;  
And I on stringéd instruments will sing  
Within God's house His praise for evermore.



FROM GREEK STORY.





## ALCYONÉ.

“NAY,—leave me not;” she cried, and her bared  
arms,

Wherefrom the saffron robe flowed back as waves  
That on white Naxos break, still closer clung:

“So newly am I come within thy walls,  
That still I crave a sense of welcome nigh  
To banish strangeness; and I scarce do feel  
My title to thy home’s sweet sovereignties,  
Unless that thou be by to prove it good:  
I seem no alien, when I turn to thee,  
With questioning looks that read their answer writ  
Large-letter’d on thy brow. But missing thee,  
I sigh o’er many a precious love foregone,  
Brooding upon it,—that none of all I cherished,  
The tender playmates of my rock-bound Isle,  
My surf-wash’d Strongylé,—do smile me back  
The fond, old time, or with home-voice recall  
My happy by-gone. If thou goest abroad,  
I droop perforce: The past, for which thy presence  
No sea-room grants, beats strong against my heart

As on our cliffs the surge was wont to beat ;  
And yet, how quick its ebbing, when thou dost come  
To fill its hollowed depths !”

—“Thy moaning, Sweet,  
Is sad as Cyprian doves’ when from her isle  
Their Goddess wanders. Love doth overstate  
The soft self-pity of thy loneliness :  
Thou knowest the violets hoard their odors best  
In the night-absence of their lord, the sun :”  
And Ceÿx pointed to the land-lock’d bay  
Where rocked his vessel.—“Not more smooth,”—he  
said

“Thy molten mirror than yon crystal sea :  
Confess thy fears’ forecastings, little one,  
Have like a goad behind thy pleadings, pricked  
Keener than love even,—hurrying on thy speech,  
And honeying it with artifice : Well, let  
The bee snatch at the rosy lure, yet so  
Escape it withal !”—and smilingly he sealed  
With fast-shut kiss, the dewy-parted lips.

“But heed thou not thy pillow’s scared unrest  
That drones to thee of peril when I am gone :  
Left now alone, keep thou my state upholden  
With self-assertion of thy dignities  
Of gracious wifehood,—sure that in my heart,

Thy royal realm, love busies all the hours,  
Building a palace fit to be thy home.

“To Claros swiftly borne,—my doubts dissolved  
Before the Oracle,—I’ll haste to mount  
The homeward wave; and passion, gathering strength,  
And overtopping hindering circumstance,  
Soon on thy bosom shall break, and ripple up  
In creamy kisses, stranded on thy mouth.

“What?—eyes still cloud-wrack’d as the hidden top  
Of blue Olympus? . . . Know the Immortal Gods  
Claim loyal service, and I dare not put  
Supreme above it, this too-sufficing love,  
Lest they do frown on us with harmful brows.  
Then let me go; and thou, meanwhile, high heap  
Apollo’s shrine: for thy on-wafting prayers  
Will speed me surelier than the kindest winds  
By Zephyrus loosed.”

With rapid sail full-set  
Toward the far Isle, King Ceÿx from the deck  
Waved light farewells to her, his weeping bride,  
Who stood with outstretcht arms on the white sands,—  
Even as he gazed, doting upon the tears,  
The breathless throbs and palpitating doubts  
Wherewith Alcyoné’s so wifely love

Had wrapped itself,—as 'twere a drapery flung  
In zoneless freedom above the sanctity  
Of foamy swell and billowy curve, whose grace  
Was heightened thereby, not hid.

Days passed amain,  
Yet brought small respite to the mind distraught  
With fateful prescience and consuming dread.  
The girdle that with wealth of needlecraft  
Against his coming she wrought, slipt listlessly  
Down from her lap, and tuneless lay the lyre  
She used to touch for him,—as eve by eve,  
Her vision dazed through travelling e'er so oft  
The golden path he went athwart the main—  
With boding heart she watched his coming.

Thus,  
Among her cushions, with her wistful face  
Turned seaward, so the first white glint of sail  
Might greet her sight,—ere she was 'ware, she slept,  
And sleeping, dreamed. She saw above her bend  
The mist-crown'd Thetis,—every look informed  
With pity goddess-like; and on her ear  
Fell words as sad as whispering Oreads' hid  
In piney forests:

“Thou shalt watch in vain,  
O sorrowful!—shalt wait and watch in vain:

For nevermore the sail that hence hath borne  
Thy darling, shall come back again to thee  
Out from the purple deep, where low he lies  
Couched in fair Aphrodité's coral caves."

Up-starting from her dream, Alcyoné  
Uttered a cry of woe: and calling around  
Her household-maidens, straightway to the beach  
That stretcht afar beneath the new-risen moon,  
Hasted,—her hair unbound, her milk-white feet  
Unsandal'd, and her quick-caught garments flung  
Girdleless to the breeze.

Along the shore

Wailing she strayed, reaching her pleading arms  
To woo him from the inexorable sea:

"O best,—O dearest!—Come to me once more!  
Again,—O come again!—All life, all hope,  
All cheer my soul can ever know,—all good,  
I hold alone through thee: Give back thyself,  
Thyself to me; I perish else,—I perish!  
—Gods! Dare ye babble, ye weakling comforters,  
Of other solace left? . . . As if this drear,  
Wide, empty world *could* hold one joy beside,  
My King being gone! Offer yon salty spray  
To lips that shrivel with deadly thirst, and think

To quench it! O my lord,—my lord,—my life!  
Better to me than all the dwellers in heaven,  
Dearer to me than all the peopled earth,—  
I die without thee!”

Moaning thus she went,  
Her hand-maids following, weeping at the dole  
They shrank to soothe, until she reached a jut  
Of headland, at whose base the waters chafed  
With ceaseless lap and fret. Gazing therefrom,  
Her feverish vision seized upon a blot  
Of darkness on the silvery line of beach;  
And turning to her followers, all dilate  
With wide-eyed apprehension,—thitherward  
She dumbly pointed.

Ere their lips found words,  
Fast down the ledge of splinter'd rock she sped  
With delicate feet that left the wounding flints  
Crimson-besprent.

Soon as she gained the strand,  
And neared the blackening speck, upon the night,  
Came wafted upward to the listeners' ears,  
A shriek of such unutterable bale  
As held them rooted to the lichen'd shelve  
With horror: for it told what not their fears  
Had shaped into a thought,—that the worst woe  
That could befall their mistress, had befallen,—

That whom she sought, she found,—her husband,—  
dead,

Dead,—drifted shoreward, as an ocean-weed.

They saw her rush with wringing hands to fling  
Herself upon him: but betwixt the drowned  
And living, swept a refluent wave that sucked  
The lifeless form back to the gulping deep,  
And from the scarpéd cliff, the gazers heard  
The breeze-borne words:—

“To thee I come,—I come,  
Belovéd, since thou mayst not come to me!  
Reach out thine arms above the bitter brine,  
And let me leap to meet thee,—thus—”

They caught  
A gleam of flickering robes,—a quick, dull splash,—  
The sullen gurgle of recoiling waves,—  
The clamorous screaming of a startled gull  
That flapped its wings o’erhead,—but saw no more,  
For all their searchings through the moonlit night,  
For all their desolate wailings, nevermore  
The woe-worn face of sad Alcyoné.

When wintry storms were spent, and lenient airs  
Smoothed with caressing hand the furrow’d surge





## ERINNA'S SPINNING.

THE Lesbian youths are all abroad to-day,  
Filling the vales with mirth, and up and down  
The festive streets, with roses garlanded,  
Go hand in hand fair Mytilen 's daughters.

Slaves follow, bearing baskets overheaped  
With myrtle, ivy, lilies, hyacinths,  
And all the world of sweets, wherewith to deck  
The May-day altar of the flowery goddess.

And pranksome children, spilling on the paths  
Acanthus-blossoms from their laden'd arms,  
Come shouting after, mad with heyday glee,  
Making fit ending to the gay procession.

Sweet goddess! frown not on me, though I bring  
No odorous wreath to hang above thy shrine:  
For, "See, Erinna!" stern my mother saith,  
"Thou gaddest not abroad with idle maidens.

“The buds will all unmask without thine aid,  
The fruits round to their fullness, though no trains  
Of dallying girls thus fray the noon-time hours  
That wiser thrift should give to wheel and distaff.”

And so I bide at home the day-long hours,  
A prisoner at my loom: but yet my heart  
Steals after my companions, while I keep  
Time to their dances with my droning spindle.

I hear Alcæus strike his lyric string,  
I catch our Sappho's answering choric song  
On some high festival,—and my stirr'd soul  
Flutters to spring beyond the bars that cage it.

O for the April birth-right of the trees!  
O for the Dryad's scope to sun my thoughts  
Till they unfold in myriad leafiness,  
As now the quickening earth unfolds her blossoms.

But like a frost the nipping voice grates harsh:  
—“Hence with thy tablets, girl! The gods above  
Made thee a woman, formed for household needs,  
For wifely handicraft and ministration.

“Pluck out these climbing fancies from thy thought,  
Poor, weedy things, that ape the fibrous strength

Of overshadowing man,—only to fail,  
And failing so, to leave thee less a woman.

“Do what thou wilt,—gird up thy maiden-gear,—  
Wrestle with athletes,—hurl the warlike dart,—  
Spin forth the discus,—in the Isthmian games  
Enroll thyself amid the sleek-limb'd runners;

“Or with the Delphian lyre, essay thy skill,—  
Or measure dithyrambs with Æolian bards;  
And for thy pains,—confess thyself outdone  
Ever and always, gauged by manhood's stature.”

If I make answer, that chaste Artemis  
Is wise as Pythius, or the Queen of Heaven  
Is strong of purpose as Olympian Jove,—  
She hastes to silence me with hot impatience:

“What man of men upon a woman's face  
Hath pored to learn therefrom aught other lore  
Than her one lesson, love?” I answer low,  
—“A woman taught her art once to a hero!”

She chafes:—“I am beholden for thy hint:  
'The stylus fits *thee*, sooth, as did the skein,  
The hand of Hercules, who sat unsex'd  
—Struck for his dulness by the queenly slipper!”

Whereat the taunt: "What youth of Lesbos, stout,  
Well-knit of limb, as ripe for peace as war,  
In strophes versed by seer of Chios wrought,  
Will think to choose *thee* for thy trick of singing?

"Nay—talk with him of soft Milesian wools—  
Of Colchian linens,—rose or saffron dyes,—  
Of broidery patterns for thy silken web,—  
Of Cyprian wines; the youth is fond to listen.

" 'This maiden,'—(giving heed, he ponders thus,)  
'Could order aptly housely offices,  
Could rule discreetly the sweet realm of home,  
Could rear, control and wisely guide my children.' "

Herewith she ends: "Erinna, have thou heed;  
Let Lesbian virgins dance, let Sappho sing,  
Improvident of wifhood's disciplines;  
Thou,—rend thy scrolls, and keep thee to thy spinning."

But what care I for wifhood? . . . I, so young!  
For matron dignities?—They clog and bind:  
For petty talk—"Are olives fine this year?"—  
"Are figs full-formed?"—Beshrew my mother's wisdom!

I would renounce them all for Sappho's bay,—  
Forego them all for room to chant out free  
The silent rhythms I hum within my heart,  
And so for ever leave my weary spinning!

## THE FLIGHT OF ARETHUSA.

### I.

NEAR a cool Arcadian river,  
    Shadowed to its broider'd brink,  
By the snowy-blossom'd alders,  
    Stooped a maiden down to drink.  
On the hills her flying footsteps  
    Had been fleet as antelope's,  
While her train the Virgin-huntress  
    Led along the Eléan slopes:  
Till o'erweary with pursuing, she had turned aside to  
    lave  
Burning cheek and throbbing forehead in the violet-  
    tinted wave.

### II.

From her panting waist she lightly  
    Let the loosen'd girdle float,  
And undid the golden arrow  
    That about her ivory throat

Held the purple peplon gathered,  
Till the vestment slid and fell  
From her bosom's orbéd whiteness  
From her shoulder's sloping swell ;  
And she started from the vision which the glassing  
water threw,  
Ravisht with the mirror'd beauty—back upon her blush-  
ing view.

## III.

Buried half in ferny mosses,  
One supporting hand gleamed fair,  
While its fellow freed the braidings  
Of the hyacinthine hair :  
And as from the binding fillet  
Fluttered each voluptuous tress,  
Leaping high, the wooing water  
Caught it in a glad caress :  
When she leaned above its surface, as a crescent lily  
dips,  
Every ripple rushed to lavish kisses on her fragrant lips.

## IV.

Arms, invisibly entwining,  
Round her slender neck were thrown,  
Round her neck whose veinéd opal  
Mocked the curded Thasian stone.

But the startled maiden, quivering  
Like a timorous mountain roe,  
When it hears the arrow hurtle  
From Diana's silver bow,—  
Snatching up her dripping ringlets from the unseen  
fingers' play,  
Through the scented, windless thickets sprang with footed  
haste away.

## V.

Breathlessly along the valley,  
By the tangled myrtle-glade,  
Underneath the flowering citrons,  
And the aspens' flickering shade,  
On she sped,—her footsteps skimming  
Fast as morning's viewless wind,  
As she saw her fond pursuer  
Roll his gathering tide behind.  
Then distraught she prayed for succor, and beneath her  
sandal'd feet  
Gushed a fountain,—and her being passed into its waters  
sweet.

## VI.

But she might not thus elude him;  
And within one pearly chain,



Sought he now to bind their currents  
That they should not part again.  
When through subterranean sources,  
Soft the Naiad strove to glide,  
He, by love's divining secret,  
Evermore was near her side:  
Till, through long pursuit triumphant, under far Sicilia's  
sun,  
Alpheus and Arethusa met and mingled into one.

## RHODOPÉ'S SANDAL.

SLANT, arrowy beams from sheath of Helios dropt,  
With golden lustre tipped the willowy marge  
    Of a pellucid stream that slid  
    Seaward with low, recurrent lapse,  
That lulled the senses like a Lydian flute.

The lotos bowed above the tide and dreamed;  
The broad-leaved calamus arose and fell  
    As on a lover's breast the head  
    His beating heart hath rocked to sleep;  
And all the air was drowsed with tropic calm.

Parting aside the willows, coyly came  
A maiden,—stealing on with furtive step  
    And shy, quick-glancing eyes that turned  
    Hither and thither, like a bird's,  
Who fears invasion of her callow brood,

She stood and listened: There,—a heron's splash,—  
O'erhead, the sunset crooning of a dove,—

The shrill cicala's cry—the purl  
Of rushes laughing in their sleep—  
Were all the sounds that broke the solitude.

Then, unafraid, she loosed her sandals off,  
And hung her fillet on a pensile bough;  
And from her virgin waist unbound  
The crimson zone of broidery-work,  
And slipt her garments from her crouching form.

Instant, she leaped, chin-deep, within the flood,  
Waking the water-lilies with her plunge,  
And scattering sparkles all about,  
Until her clinging hair was crowned  
With jewels bright as queenly diadem.

As thus she sported, careless and secure,  
An eagle sailing from his eyried height,  
—(Her fate beneath his wings,) swooped down,  
And snatched her sandal silver-webbed,  
And bore it in his beak, straight up the blue.

Across bare, yellow sands he floated high,  
And poised above a royal city, saw  
A king sit on his judgment seat;  
And in his bosom dropt the prize,  
As if some wingéd thing sought shelter there.

Amazed, the king from out his mantle drew  
The delicate sandal,—marvelling much, if foot  
    Of zephyr or of goddess fair  
    Was fashioned in such dainty wise,  
As never yet beseeemed a mortal maid's.

“Now search the land!”—the monarch cried amain;  
“Fly east,—fly west and south and north,—nor stay  
    Until ye find the foot that wore  
    This little sandal silver-webbed,  
And lead the wearer to my palace gates.”

Fast sped the messengers,—nor sped they far:  
For soon they found the silver sandal's mate,  
    And fitted both upon the feet  
    That were like Psyche's, white and small,  
As only formed to skim Olympian floors.

They drew the maiden from her olives' shade,  
And in the simple garments that she wore,  
    Led her all-blushing, to the king,  
    Who smiling, raised her to his throne:  
And thus fair Rhodopé became a queen.

## THE QUENCHED BRAND.\*

### I.

UPON her couch the pale-cheek'd mother lay,  
Her intertwining hands upraised in prayer  
To Heré, for a blessing on her child,—  
Her seven-days' babe, that, wrapt in leopard-skins,  
Close at her side lay sleeping.

At Calydon, King Œneus kept high feast,  
And shed libations for his last-born son,  
Till all the palace rang with merriment,  
And the dark wine of Chios, freely drunk,  
Made glad the shouting people.

And now the revellers had parted thence,  
Leaving a drowsy quiet in the halls,

\* The only apology that can be made for handling a subject so finely and exhaustively treated in *Atalanta in Calydon*, is, that the above was written *before* the author had seen this master-piece.

That steeped Althæa's senses, as with breath  
Of Attica's dew-freshened asphodels,  
Or Eastern mandragora.

At ease thus lying, with light-wingéd thoughts  
Buzzing about her fruited heart like bees  
About a basket-heap of amber grapes,  
She smiled through inward sweet content, and reached  
To touch her boy, still smiling.

When all a-sudden, the mild-scented air  
Grew murk, and chillness overhung the room,  
And on the hearth the bickering flame that played  
Among the cloven cedar branches, sank,—  
Swallowed in sullen ashes.

The fateful Moiræ with their stony eyes  
Stood at the couch-foot: on the child they gazed,  
Still softly slumbering in his dappled skins,  
Then on the mother as she stretched her hands  
In awe-struck deprecation.

And Clotho spake: "Thou seest yon lighted brand;  
When it hath smouldered down to leaden ash,  
This sleeping child shall die: 'Tis so decreed:  
Yet spare thy tears; The sight of mortals' grief  
Moves not the stern Erinyes."

Whereon they vanished. But what direst fate  
May not be thwarted by a mother's love?  
—Althæa trembling, weaker for her fears,  
Sprang from her couch, and seizing the red brand  
    Within the tall urn quenched it.

And in an ivory coffer at her side  
She locked it close, ere that her maidens came;  
And in her fragrant bosom dropt the key;  
And all the while the little babe slept on,  
    His face with smilings rippled.

## II.

Fast went the years. Althæa saw her boy,  
Become the pride of the Etolian land,  
Wondrous for beauty,—famed for bold exploits,—  
Foremost among the venturous Argonauts  
    That bore the Fleece from Colchis.

And all abroad was blown his loudening praise,  
When from the ravaged plains his prowess rid

The tuskéd curse, the scourge of Artemis,—  
And to the warrior-sharers of the chase,  
Portioned the spoil of conquest.

Yet in the Hunt of Calydon the strife  
Waxed hot, and plunging midmost in the fight,  
The son of Æneus, striking right and left,  
Pierced even to the death, a famous Prince,—  
His mother's nearest kinsman.

Fast-footed sped the news: "The eldest born  
Of Thestius lies by Meleágros slain!"  
Whereat Althæa's heart was racked with grief,—  
Grief for the brother lost, and utmost rage  
Against the hand that slew him.

She tore the crescent fillet from her head,  
And from her shoulders flung the queenly robe,—  
And with rent locks made wail:—"Were not we twain  
Nursed at one mother's bosom,—dandled each  
By the same kingly father?"

"O most unhappy!—What strange madness this!  
That he, my son, should smother out in blood  
A mother's pity!—Hear, ye vengeful Gods!  
Hear me, O Dis, Lord of the shadowy Land,  
And bid him to thy Hades!"



Thus wild she prayed, unwitting of her words:  
But Atropos, the dread Unchangeable,  
Heard and decreed: "The slayer shall be slain;  
The fagot kept beneath the coffer's lid  
Shall quick consume to ashes."

And some stood nigh, who when the warrior came  
Within the doors, made haste to utter forth  
Close in his hearing, the delirious words  
His sorrow-smitten mother spake when crazed  
For anguish of the fallen.

Wherefore the soul of Meleághros grew  
Sullen,—defiant, and he hung aloft  
His dinted armor high upon the wall,  
Saying unto his wife who loosed his belt,  
—"I go no more to battle."

### III.

Thereon it happed, when those who would avenge  
Their Prince's death, no longer saw the Chief

Most feared of all, among the combatants,—  
They laid Ætolia waste, and Calydon  
Was leaguered with their armies.

And ever as their hosts were beaten back,  
Wave-like, they came again; and month by month  
They battered at the walls until they shook,  
And in the imminence of the close-girt siege,  
Despair stalked through the city.

“O would that Meleáeros led us forth!”  
The warriors sighed beneath the tottering walls;  
But unavailing were their utmost pleas,  
Though women came and at his threshold knelt,  
And filled his halls with wailings.

Until at length before his listless knees  
The yellow-haired, fair Kleopatra fell,  
And wrapped his beard about her hands and wept:  
Then lightly sprang, and from the lofty wall  
Snatched down the cobwebbed helmet:

Sobbing—“My husband, put aside thy wrath;  
Think on the woe that overwhelms thy land;  
Think on thine ancient sire,—the hungry babes  
That drain the wan-faced mothers’ empty breasts,  
And wake thy soul to pity!

“Behold thy children!—See they seize my robe,  
And cling and clamor for the bread withheld:  
And this pale starveling!—Ah, the fig he craves  
Is past my granting: Must we perish all,  
And thine the power to save us?”

He heard, the Leader of the mighty Hunt,  
And answered not: but girt his armor on,  
And strode straight outward to the yielding walls,  
And gave such speech that the disheartened cried,  
—“Hope comes with Meleágros!”

He summoned whom the cruel siege had spared,  
And bade the women strengthen them with food,—  
Searching the cellars for last stint of wine;  
And fed them to the full, while mothers wept  
At thought of starving children.

And when their hearts were cheered, he bade the gates  
Fly open, and he flung the desperate band,  
Himself the first, upon the unguarded foe,  
And drove them far beyond Ætolia's plain,  
And back returned victorious.

No spear had scathed him, nor an arrow grazed;  
And yet the harsh Erinyes, unappeased,

Forecasting his destruction, moved the men  
Of Calydon to discontentful plaints  
That brake in sullen speeches.

“Behold,” they said,—“this Hercules of ours!  
What thanks owe we to *him*?—No love of us,  
No rueing of our ills, outweighed to rend  
His tame inaction: The fair-haired girl-wife  
Alone hath saved the city.”

He heard their cavils, and his heart grew hot:  
“Unkennel’d dogs!” he chafed,—“that snarl against  
The hand that slips their chain!”—and high he hung  
Upon the wall his brazen gear once more,  
Nor went among the people;

But sat within at Kleopatra’s side,  
And hearkened to the tales she skilled to weave  
About her sire, and all the steadfast love  
That won Marpessa from Apollo’s grasp,—  
Marpessa, her fair mother.

And as Althæa watched his sloth, her heart  
Grew envious-angry, and against her son  
Turned with quick passion,—seeing his father waste,  
Unhelped of him, and with her hasty breath  
She fanned the sharp vexation.

“What good doth he to Calydon,—with ears  
Full-stuffed with woolly speech, hands bounden fast  
By yonder lengths of yellow-floating hair?  
Nay! such ensample undermines the state;  
—Fates! do your work upon him!”

Then with rash hand, the blackened brand long hid  
Within the ivory coffer, forth she drew,  
And on the glowing coals of juniper  
Flung it remorseless down, and saw the flame  
With forkéd tongue enfold it.

Within his distant hall, his children nigh,  
His wife quick plying of her rattling loom,  
Himself upon some carven idless bent,—  
The face of Meleágros sudden drooped,  
Blanched with a ghastly pallor.

Spilling her shuttles on the marble floor,  
Upstart Kleopatra with a cry  
Caught from the children rushing to sustain;  
And with her scooping hand across his brow  
She flung the lustral water.

“In vain”—he gasped—“In vain! Dark Atropos  
Draweth anear; I see her mystic form:

Come hither, little ones!—and thou, my wife,  
Whom I have loved above our Calydon,  
Still let me feel thy presence.

“Thy beauty was to me beyond renown,—  
Thy songs delightsomer than mouthéd praise,—  
Thy love life-giving as Olympian wine;  
Yea,—kiss me close!—all shall be ours again  
In the pale realm of shadows.

“Upon the flowery banks of Acheron”—  
But even as he panted forth the word,  
The last faint flutter on Althæa's hearth  
Went out in darkness:—and the warrior lay  
Dead as the ashen embers.

BALLAD AND OTHER VERSE.





## THE LADY HILDEGARDE'S WEDDING.

"I DARE not doubt his word,"—she said,  
With steadfast voice and clear;  
"For sure as knight did ever plight  
True faith, he will be here.

"He sware it on this crested ring,  
That by our Lord's dear leave,  
He'd wed me here at Lyndismere,  
This blessed Christmas Eve."

—Sir Walter dallied with his blade,  
And his steel eyne grew wroth:  
"Nay sweetheart, see!—it cannot be:  
Thy knight hath broke his troth."

Out spake the Lady Hildegarde  
 With grieved, reproachful air :  
 "None other may such slander say,—  
 My father only dare !

"My bower-maids all await my call,  
 My bridesmen will be here ;  
 And merry throngs with wedding songs  
 Shall bide at Lyndismere."

"Now out upon thee !—simple lass !"  
 With heat Sir Walter cried ;  
 "To-morrow e'en, with seas between,  
 How can'st thou be a bride ?

"The Nether-land is far o'erseas,  
 And angry storms may roar ;  
 Or war may send (which Heaven forbend !)  
 Tidings to vex thee sore.

"Forbear, until the galliot drop  
 Anchor at Malden-head,  
 To fix the day, and yea or nay,  
 Proclaim thou wilt be wed.

"Let the old Hall ring loud and high  
 With roistering Twelfth-night cheer ;

Bring holly-glow and mistletoe  
To garland Lyndismere.

“Let frolic mummers don their masks,  
Let morris-dancers come  
And reel and sing in jocund ring,  
With rebeck, pipe and drum.

“Of capons, boar’s-head, nut-brown ale,  
Let liberal store be shown;  
And wassail-shout shall make the bout  
The merriest ever known.

“The jesters with their bells shall plot  
All mirth-provoking pranks:  
So . . . let me sue;—forget Sir Hugh,  
And take thy father’s thanks!”

She heard, the Lady Hildegarde,  
With firm, unflinching eye;  
Then forth she stepped and onward swept,  
Disdainful of reply.

—The snows lay deep round Lyndismere,  
But generous fires blazed free,  
And casements clear flashed far and near  
Their gleams across the lea.

Retainers filled the ancient Hall,  
 Guests thronged as fell the night;  
 And rare to see, right gorgeously  
 The chapel streamed with light.

“Be brave Sir Hugh come back?”—they asked  
 The gray-haired seneschal:  
 —“‘Not yet?’—’Twas said to-night he’d wed  
 Our lady of the Hall.”

Sir Walter chafed and strode apart;  
 The cassock’d priest was seen;  
 And maidens fair came pair by pair . . .  
 “What could the folly mean!”

A sudden vision hushed the mirth,—  
 Sir Walter’s breath came hard;  
 For last of all adown the hall  
 Swept Lady Hildegarde.

“Saint Agnes!—but she’s comely!” quoth  
 The parti-color’d clown;  
 “And by the rood! in bridal hood  
 And bridal veil and gown!

“Sir Hugh should e’en be here to mark  
 The orange-posies bloom;

Will proxy do for stout Sir Hugh?

Then *I* would fain be groom!"

Straight onward to the chancel rails

The snooded maidens passed,

When suddenly the companie

Was startled by a blast,—

A blast that echoed loud and shrill

Without the castle-gate,

As though the train that paused amain

Was sorely loth to wait.

Unmoved stood Lady Hildegarde,

Nor seemed to hear nor feel,

Till up the floor, one moment more,

There tramped a clanking heel.

"*Belovéd!*"—With one bound they met!

Then dashing off a tear,

She turned and said with lifted head,—

"*Father,—Sir Hugh is here!*"

## FRA ANGELICO.

### I.

WITHIN Fiesolé's gray cloister-cell,  
In beatific vision wrapt apart,  
Tears on his cheek and prayer within his heart,  
Kneeled a cowl'd monk. The toll of convent bell,—

### II.

The iterant tread of mute Dominican  
Along the stony floor,—the sougning pines  
That sentinel'd the hills in drowsy lines,—  
The gurgle of the hidden brook that ran

### III.

Seaward beneath the walls,—a bleating lamb,—  
The far-off tinkle at the herds' release,—  
Were all the sounds that jarred the purple peace,  
Or lightly rippled the soft-gliding calm.

## IV.

Within a niche withdrawn, an easel stood  
With implements of artist-craft displayed;  
And where a missal's leaves were open laid,  
Fell the slant shadow of the holy rood.

## V.

Starry and golden, flame and azure hues  
Caught out of æther, waited the command  
Of that meek kneeler's mystic Master-hand,  
To glorify the canvas and transfuse

## VI.

The strange, seraphic beauty of his thought,  
Till the celestial impulse had sufficed  
To ray, with light divine the pictur'd Christ,  
At which with awed and reverent touch he wrought.

## VII.

For Art, imperious mistress, as her thrall,  
Had striven to bind him to her service fast,—  
Service, how sweet!—yet he had learned at last,  
Not to forego, but consecrate it all.

## VIII.

Thenceforth he sought his easel as a shrine,  
And bowed before it like an aureol'd saint

With eyes that swam the while he kneeled to paint  
The marred and smitten lineaments divine.

## IX.

With sunset-gold he haloed round the head  
That lay aforetime on the lowly straw,  
While visions glorious as the shepherds saw,  
With sacred ecstasy his spirit fed.

## X.

If from the spangled meadows any bear  
The creamy leaf the pasture-lily shows,  
Or brought him from the hedge, a folded rose,—  
Some cherub's cheek their mingled tints would wear.

## XI.

The mists that hallowed morning's tranquil skies,  
The crystal hoarded in the violet's cup,  
Lent their pathetic gleams to kindle up  
The heaven-toucht haze of Mary's clouded eyes.

## XII.

And thus he served the Master, while he trod  
The path he loved the best,—inspired to fill  
His work with worship's rapture, climbing still  
Beauty's ascending steps that lead to God.



XIII.

“*Beáto :*”—So they named him: and by this,  
Down-drifting to us from the Long Ago,  
The pure, enthusiast life we come to know,  
That gave to Art its holiest types of bliss.

## THE NAMELESS PILGRIM.\*

“Now where-away fare ye, son of mine?”—

Ædwen the mother said;

“And why are these stalwart limbs of thine  
So weary and ill-bestead?”

—“A-weary am I, with woeful ruth,

Thou sayest it, mother sweet;

For he that I served with a liegeman's truth,  
Hath trodden me underfeet.”

“Now who be the baron foul or fair,

Saxon or Norman he,

Requiteth thy fealty thus?—declare

Wherefore he chode with thee.”

And Godric made answer:—“Sooth to tell,

'Tis a tale thou hast heard afore:

The World is the Master I wrought for well,

But he payeth me wage no more.

\* An incident in the life of the Saxon hermit, Saint Godric.

“With a gnawing hunger I craved the bread  
I had eaten through riotous years ;  
My trencher he heaped with ashes instead,  
And for wine he poured me tears.”

Then Ædwen the mother was tearful-glad,  
And she claspt her agéd palms,  
And lifted to heaven her eyes, long sad,  
And worshipped the Lord in psalms.

“Naught other vassalage wilt thou seek?”  
She questioned in hope and fear ;  
—“I would have thee fain of the fen-lands speak,  
And thy home on the marshy Wear.”

“Nay, never again by the marshy Wear  
Will I fashion my wattled home ;  
For a pilgrim,—ye wot by the token here,—  
Now wendeth his way to Rome.”

“O blesséd Saint Cuthbert of The Isles !”  
Cried Ædwen,—“In very deed,  
Thou hast heard my prayers, and hast rent the wiles,  
And the thrall of sin is freed !

“I also a pilgrim’s pains would feel,—  
Thirst, weariness, hunger, heat ;

I also, for Christ's sweet sake, would kneel  
At the Holy Father's feet."

Then Ædwen and Godric, hand in hand  
Journeyed o'er broomy down,  
Across gray moor and pasture-land,  
By thorpe and stead and town:

And as they neared the shingly beach,  
Adown by the billows blue,  
A maiden drew nigh, and with silvery speech  
Said,—“I am a pilgrim too.”

The fierce, stout gaze of Godric quailed  
As he met her dove-like look,  
And his spirit, in pride of manhood mailed,  
Like a reed of the river shook.

They spared to question her of her name,  
Of her high or low degree;  
But trusting and trusted, on they came  
To the shore of the surging sea.

Through the vineyard paths they wonned their way,  
And the hours of travail o'er,  
They laid them down at the set of day  
On many a threshing-floor.

And Ædwen the mother her mantle spread  
And covered the maiden sweet,  
As she rested her innocent, down-dropt head  
On the piles of the golden wheat.

By the wayside cross and the forest shrine,  
As they knelt at their noontide prayer,  
The sunbeams seemed in a haste to twine  
A circle about her hair.

Onward they toiled through windy pines,  
By torrents a-flash with foam,  
And compassed the crested Apennines,  
And gazed on the walls of Rome.

With daily penance and prayer and psalm,  
Each hallowéd aisle they trod,  
Till the restless bosom had won the calm  
Of a spirit at peace with God.

And ever and aye, the twain between,  
With a pure, uplifted face,  
The blue-eyed maiden walked serene,  
In her saintly, slender grace.

Their vows performed and their alms-deeds done,  
Homeward their way they bent,

And close beside, like a wimpled nun,  
The beautiful stranger went.

And back o'er the billowy Apennines,  
By meadow and garth and lea,  
Through orchards of olives and purpling vines,  
They came to the surging sea.

And then, with a wave of her filmy hands,  
As they touched the farther shore,  
The maiden glided athwart the sands,  
And they saw her face no more.

—“Now what is thy thought, O mother mine?”  
Cried Godric marvelling thus;  
“Whence came,—whither went the form divine  
That hath journeyed so long with us?”

Said Ædwen,—“The whither she goeth I ween  
No more I wete than ye;  
But certes,—Saint Catherine's self hath been  
One of the pilgrims three!”

## THE DUMB POET.

### I.

HE does not wind about his thought  
Iambics flexile as the willow;  
His surge of feeling is not wrought  
Into a foamy line of billow.

### II.

His garden of Hesperides  
Displays no trim-set, bounded border,  
And o'er it his Hymettian bees  
Hum in mellifluous disorder.

### III.

In rhythmic, art-constructed cells  
He does not hive the Attic honey  
He finds deep hid in darksome dells,  
Or stored in clover-pastures sunny.

### IV.

From evening's streaks of threaded light  
That woof the sky with hues elysian,

He is not skilled to weave aright  
The iris of the poet's vision.

## V.

The brook, soft lapsing o'er the sand  
In bubbling laughs,—shallow'd slumbers,  
He does not pour with gauging hand  
Into the jewel'd cup of numbers.

## VI.

He cannot strain the robin's brief,  
One-thoughted song into a sonnet;  
Nor catch the wavering maple-leaf,  
To trace an autumn pastoral on it.

## VII.

Yet never to the poet's view  
Did liberal Nature e'er discover  
More of the secrets sweet and true  
She tells to none but those who love her.

## VIII.

The break of morning holds for him  
A joy beyond all words' revealing;  
And pictures, vast, mysterious, dim,  
Illumine twilight's frescoed ceiling.



## IX.

Like litanies, the murmurous rain  
Makes a cathedral-service solemn;  
He hears the myriad-voiced "*Amen*"  
Beneath each leafy arch and column.

## X.

The wheat that bows its ripen'd head,  
The meadow steeped in purple glory,  
The landscape-page before him spread,—  
Are cantos of his Epic Story!

## XI.

From Nature,—true Permessian source,  
Wells the pure joy of feeling,—seeing;  
But Love inspires the lyric force  
That shapes the Idyl of his being.

## XII.

The golden missal of the Past,  
With rich illuminations burning,  
Love blazoned it from first to last,—  
And see! . . . its leaves are worn with turning!

## XIII.

He *lives* his Poem:—day by day,  
Its choric chime his thought engages:

And songs of hope are stored away  
Within the future's uncut pages.

## XIV.

O my Dumb Poet, in whose soul  
Love still the mystic psalm rehearses,  
Make thou mine open heart thy scroll,  
And fill it with thy marvellous verses!

## THE BABY'S MESSAGE.

### I.

“O, IT is beautiful!—Lifted so high,—  
Up where the stars are,—into the sky,—  
Out of the fierce, dark grasp of pain,  
Into the rapturous light again!

### II.

“Whence do ye bear me, shining ones,  
Over the dazzling paths of suns?  
Wherefore am I thus caught away  
Out of my mother's arms to-day?

### III.

“Never before have I left her breast,—  
Never been elsewhere rocked to rest:  
Yet,—I am wrapt in a maze of bliss,  
Tell me what the mystery is!”

### IV.

—“Baby-spirit, whose wondering eyes  
Kindle, ecstatic with surprise,

This is the ending of earthly breath,—  
This is what mortals mean by death.

## V.

“Far in the silences of the blue,  
See where the splendor pulses through;  
Thither, released from a world of sin,  
Thither we come to guide thee in:

## VI.

“In through each seven-fold, circling band,—  
In where the white child-angels stand,—  
Up to the throne, that thou mayest see  
Him who was once a babe like thee.”

## VII.

—“O ye seraphs of love and light!  
Stay for a little your lofty flight:  
Stay, and adown the star-sown track,  
Haste to my weeper,—haste ye back!

## VIII.

“Tell her how filled and thrilled I am,—  
Tell her how wrapt in boundless calm:  
Tell her I soar, I sing, I shine,—  
Tell her the heaven of heavens is mine!”

## IX.

—“Tenderest comforter,—Faith’s own word,  
Sweeter than ours, her heart hath heard :  
Softly her solac’d tears now fall ;  
Christ’s one whisper hath told her all !”

!

## ATTAINMENT.

[CARMEN NATALE.]

### I.

RARE-RIPE, with rich, concentrate sweetness,  
All girlish crudities subdued,  
You stand to-day, in the completeness  
Of your consummate womanhood.

### II.

The stem supports no useless flower,  
No simply graceful spathic shoot;  
But all, through fostering sun and shower,  
Develops into perfect fruit.

### III.

And this is what we looked for:—Can it  
Fail of such ends in Nature's law?  
—Who marvels at the full pomegranate,  
That watched the blossom pure from flaw?

## IV.

Yet something more than summer weather  
Ambers the heavy-cluster'd vine;  
Fierce heats,—slant rains combine together  
To fill the bounteous grapes with wine.

## V.

We heed too carelessly the uses  
Of the rude buffets of the wind,  
That vivify the quicken'd juices,  
And crimson-tint the fruity rind.

## VI.

But while we mark the mellow'd grace,  
Whose cultur'd sweetness never cloys,—  
We yet have found that sorrow's traces  
Are in the down-bloom, more than joy's.

## VII.

We learn through trial: 'Tis the story  
World-old and weary; and we know,  
Though we disclaim the wisdom hoary,  
That all our tests will prove it so.

## VIII.

*You've* conned the lesson: every feature  
Is instinct with the dear-bought lore:

You comprehend how far the creature  
Can meet the creature's need :—And more

## IX.

Than this ; you've gauged and weighed the human,  
With just, deliberate, fixt control,  
And found the perfect poise of woman,—  
The pivot-balance of her soul !

## X.

And thus,—sustained and strengthened by it,—  
You front the future : Bring it balm  
Or bring it bitter,—no disquiet  
Shall mar the inviolable calm.

## XI.

Let the years come ! They shall but double  
God's benison within your breast ;  
Nor time, nor care, nor change shall trouble  
The halcyon of this central rest.



## THE SIGNAL.

“DRAW rein there!—your horses are tramping  
An orange-boy under their feet!”  
But onward, their silver bits champing,  
They swept through the roar of the street.

Wrapped softly in cashmere and laces,  
In her phaeton a lady rolled fast,  
Nor paused to know wherefore the faces  
That turned on her, paled as she passed.

When the surges are parted that hide him,  
They see on the pitiless stones  
A child with his basket beside him,  
Too wounded for shrieking or groans.

Kind arms are stretched forward to shield him,  
—Thank God that such always we see!  
And the help that they hasten to yield him  
Is as tender as woman's would be.

—In the ward of a hospital lying,  
Where never a glimmer of joy  
Played over the sick and the dying,  
The life-light came back to the boy.

No soldier in front of the battle,  
Struck down where the terrible rain  
Of shot filled his ear with its rattle,  
Bore braver his burden of pain.

Yet how could they tell, or he ask it,  
Nor melt with regret or alarm?  
The arm that had carried his basket,—  
He must lose it,—that little right arm!

One night when the dread of it vexed him,  
The quietest sobbings were heard;  
And a child in the couch that was next him,  
Whose innermost pity was stirred,—

Broke softly the silence so stilly,  
And lifting his finger, said—“Hark!  
There’s somebody crying!—O, Willie,  
Now why do you sob in the dark?

“I know what must happen to-morrow;  
But haven’t you heard how the Lord

Takes pity on us in our sorrow,  
As He walks through the hospital ward?

“So ask Him to help you whenever  
His beautiful face is in sight;  
He'll not overlook you,—O, never!  
Perhaps He is coming to-night.”

A gleam of the suddenest gladness  
Across the wet eye-lashes stole;  
And he answered,—and smiled down the sadness  
That just had been clouding his soul,—

“I've heard when the children grow weary—  
For how can their hearts understand?  
—That they feel through the darkness so dreary,  
As He passes, and catch at His hand.

“And He leads them away to that far light,  
Where never comes sickness or woe,  
Right up through the path of the starlight,—  
I think I will ask Him to go.

“And lest I should fail to be keeping  
Strict watch,—for I'm tired and weak,  
And Jesus might pass while I'm sleeping,  
Nor know that I wanted to speak;—

“Like a signal they raise o’er the billows,  
When sailors are shipwrecked,—I’ll prop  
My arm that is broken, with pillows,  
And then He will see it,—and stop.

“And I’ll hear through the midnight so chilly,  
His voice whisper, gently and low,  
‘Are you waiting to go with me, Willie?’  
And I’ll answer,—‘I’m waiting to go.’”

—When the light of the morning had broken,  
And the bells with a chiming accord  
Were pealing their earliest token  
Like a hymn through the hospital ward,—

They saw,—and the marvel grew deeper,  
The pillow-propt arm was so wan:  
They uncovered the face of the sleeper,  
And wondered to find,—he was gone!

## UNVISITED.

HER heart was like a spring,—this gentle friend's,  
With ceaseless flow of heavenliest charities,—  
A spring upon whose brink the anemonés  
And hooded violets and shrinking ferns  
And tremulous woodland things crowd unafraid,  
Sure of the freshening that they always find.

Her smile was prodigal of summery shine,—  
Gayly persistent,—like a morn in June  
That laughs away the clouds, and up and down  
Goes making merry with the ripening grain,  
That slowly ripples,—its bent head drooped down,  
With golden secret of the sheathéd seed ;—  
A mischievous morn, that smites the poppies' cheeks  
Among the corn, till they are crimsoning  
With bashful flutterings,—a right prankish morn  
That with a frolic flow of mirthfulness,  
Kisses the bramble-blossoms till they blush.

Yet she who loved all beauty, seeing therein  
The human, the divine,—faint lineaments,  
Suggestions instinct with the All-Beautiful,  
Silently slipt away, and left the flowers  
Athirst, through missing of the moisten'd cool.

Most meet it surely were for such as she,  
To take her quietest sleep where all of fair,  
And all of gladdest things should crowd around  
To soothe and broider o'er the covering sod;  
Where story-telling brook,—responsive leaves,  
The mossy epigraph and carvings quaint  
Of cypress aisles,—the solemn organ-dirge  
Of the full-throated wind,—the pipe and coo  
Of thrushes,—Nature's purest choristers,—  
Might mingle with the flow of children's voices,  
As through their tears they smiled to read her name,  
And sobbing for pity, kissed it, on the stone.  
No otherwhere should heart so genial rest  
Than near the tombs of kindred best-beloved,  
Who hand-in-hand with her, had trod life's path,—  
Letting go, only at death's low lich-gate,  
To clasp, the other side. And yet this heart,  
So toucht with softest yearnings, moulders now  
Where not one passion-flower of love sends up  
The frailest tendril,—where no little feet  
Wear a pathetic footway round her grave

With daily treadings—where pale memory  
Can never bear her golden reliquary,  
To gather the dropt blooms and hoard them close,  
Heightening their odors with the balm of tears.

## AN ALPINE PICTURE.

[AFTER RUSKIN.]

FERNY pastures, beetling rock,  
Slopes half-islanded by streams,  
Glisten in the amber gleams  
Of the sunshine,—gleams that mock  
Shadow'd field and cool grey rock.

Farther up, the sobbing pines  
Hold their uncontested sway,  
Shutting out the smiling day  
With their sullen, serried lines,  
—Mournful, melancholy pines!

Through them, with eternal roar,  
From the glaciers, thunder deep  
Cataracts, whose tremendous leap  
Pales them, plunging evermore  
Shuddering through the twilight roar:



Filling with their misty cold,  
All the gorges in their fall,  
As athwart the granite wall  
Which they loosen from its hold,  
Down they shiver, blanched with cold.

Thread this craggy mountain-path  
Fringed with ferns that shun the light;  
Climb the ridg'd and rugged height:  
Stand within the arch that hath  
Bounded in the curving path.

Dark against the whitened foam,  
Rises a rude cross of pine,  
Whose mysterious, sacred sign  
Lifts the thoughts that guideless roam,  
Skyward, through the eddying foam.

From the lichen'd foothold gaze  
Out upon the pale, far sky,  
Where the peaks that stretch so high  
Catch the roseate, dying day's  
Faint-shot flushes, as you gaze.

Drop your vision fathoms down  
Yonder cavernous abyss,  
Where the torrents seethe and hiss,

And the jagged snow-crag frown,  
Drop it like a plummet down.

Sheer along the laboring steep,  
Where the traveller's alpenstock  
Needs must pierce the crevic'd rock,  
Let your straining glances sweep,  
Measuring all the toilsome steep.

Then, look up!—See how the cross  
Casts its symbol-shade sublime  
O'er the wrack and roar of time,—  
O'er its fret and moil and loss:  
So! . . . we'll rest here,—at the cross.

## THE COLOR-BEARER.

THE shock of battle swept the lines,  
And wounded men and slain  
Lay thick as lie in summer fields  
The ridgy swathes of grain.

The deadly phalanx belched its fire,  
The raking cannon pealed,  
The lightning-flash of bayonets  
Went glittering round the field.

On rushed the steady *Twenty-Fourth*  
Against the bristling guns,  
As if *their* gleams could daunt no more  
Than that October sun's.

It mattered not though heads went down,  
Though gallant steps were stayed,  
Though rifles dropped from bleeding hands,  
And ghastly gaps were made,—

“*Close up!*”—was still the stern command,  
And with unwavering tread,  
They held right on, though well they knew  
They tracked their way with dead.

As fast they pressed with laboring breath,  
Clinched teeth and knitted frown,  
The sharp, arrestive cry rang out,—  
“*The color-bearer’s down!*”

Quick to the front sprang, at the word,  
The youngest of the band,  
And caught the flag still tightly held  
Within the fallen hand.

With cheer he reared it high again,  
Yet claimed one instant’s pause  
To lift the dying head and see  
What comrade’s face it was.

“*Forward!*”—the captain shouted loud,  
Still “*Forward!*”—and the men  
Snatched madly up the shrill command,  
And shrieked it out again.

But like a statue stood the boy,  
Without a foot’s advance,

Until the captain shook his arm,  
And roused him from his trance.

—His home had flashed upon his sight,  
The peaceful, sunny spot!  
He did not hear the crashing shells,  
Nor heed the hissing shot.

He saw his mother wring her hands,  
He caught his sister's shriek,—  
And sudden anguish racked his brow,  
And blanched his ruddy cheek.

The touch dissolved the spell,—he knew,  
He felt the fearful stir;  
He raised his head and softly said,  
—“He was my brother, sir!”

Then grasping firm the crimson flag  
He flung it free and high,  
While patriot-passion stanch'd his grief,  
And drank its channels dry.

Between his close-set teeth he spake,  
And hard he drew his breath,—  
“God help me, sir,—I'll bear this flag  
To victory,—or to death!”

The bellowing batteries thundered on,  
The sulph'rous smoke rose higher,  
And from the columns in their front,  
Poured forth the galling fire.

But where the bullets thickest fell,  
Where hottest raged the fight,  
The steady colors tossed aloft  
Their blood-red trail of light.

Firm and indomitable still  
The *Twenty-Fourth* moved on,  
A dauntless remnant only left,—  
The staunch three-score were gone!

And now once more the shout arose  
Which not the guns could drown,—  
“Ho, boys!—Up with the flag again!  
The color-bearer's down!”

They strove to free his grasp,—but fast  
He clung with desperate will;  
—“The arm that's broken is my *left*,  
See!—I can hold it still!”

And “*Forward! Twenty-Fourth!*” rang out  
Above the deafening roar,

Till, all at once, the colors lowered,  
Sank, and were seen no more.

And when the stubborn fight was done,  
And from the fast-held field  
The order'd remnant slow retired,  
Too resolute to yield,—

They found a boy whose face still wore  
A look resolved and grand,  
Who held a riddled flag close clutched  
Within his shatter'd hand.

## NINETEEN.

### I.

My maiden of the violet eyes,  
White-lidded as the mists of morning,  
Half clouded with a coy surprise  
Their changeful, shimmering depths adorning:—

### II.

Fresh-lipped like any night-shut rose,  
Beaded with youth's delicious potion,—  
And cheeks whose colour comes and goes  
As comes and goes the quick emotion:

### III.

The vernal flush of fresh nineteen,  
With all its clear, auroral glory,  
Enrobes you like a fairy queen  
Within a realm of fairy story.

### IV.

You breathe so rarefied an air,  
No rainy films, no hazes seeing,



Our sluggish pulses could not bear  
The atmosphere that feeds your being.

## V.

So golden seems the lustrous reach  
Of the long summer day before you,—  
So boundless the aërial stretch  
Of the blue heavens' enchantment o'er you,—

## VI.

You cannot know nor understand  
How those pale hills so softly distant  
Can steep the broad, sunshiny land  
In shadows gradual, sure, persistent.

## VII.

You comprehend that life has care;  
You've seen it oft grow grand with duty;  
Through small attritions watched it wear,  
Till shorn of all its earlier beauty:

## VIII.

And you have said—"It shall not be  
Thus with *my* morning's pearly promise;  
We *need* not,—if we *will* not,—see  
The beautiful go drifting from us."

## IX.

My maiden of the violet eyes,  
Forget in faith so pure and holy,  
That gloom upon the mountain lies,—  
Dusk in the gorges darkens slowly.

## X.

Descend not from your æther-height  
To meet the shadows: Let them rather  
Wind low along the vales where night  
Begins her hooded mists to gather.

## XI.

Keep on your lips the fragrant dew,  
And in your eyes the sheen so tender;  
Youth's morning dawns but once, and you  
But once can walk its rubied splendor!

## WINE ON THE LEES.

“TWELVE years ago to-day:—how short it seems!  
And but that you have calendared the time  
Beyond disproof, I should affirm it less  
By half a dozen, since that English June  
Gave me the English Margaret for my wife.  
Do you remember how we wrangled, strove,  
Grew angry and made up a score of times,  
Ere we made sure the memorable day—  
The golden pivot upon which should turn  
Our circling future?”

“Ah,—so like a man,  
To question my remembrance! Woman’s heart  
Is not the waxen tablet that you feign;  
Love’s stylus wears, for her, a diamond point,  
And smoothe the plastic surface as she may,  
It cuts into the ivory beneath,  
And leaves its sharp, incisive characters  
Graven there for ever. Wiser man, you see,  
Gives love a reed to write with: there’s the difference.”

“My inconclusive, sweet philosopher!  
Was it a reed I wrote with, when I scored  
Down in my scroll of life, that ‘Tenth of June?’”

“Nay,—for the nonce, I lent my diamond point:  
Or rather, I insist it *was* a reed,  
But that the tablet being a woman’s heart,  
Love’s lightest mark became indelible.  
—Once groove your name upon a sapling’s rind,  
And all the erasing years of storm and shine  
Will only greater it, until the scar  
Becomes exaggerate in its knotted bole:  
And even so . . .”

“I do accept it, Sweet!  
But memory cannot hold a mirror up  
Clearer to you, reflecting fairly back  
The precious nothings of that bridal-morn  
Than now to me. How well I can recall,  
Each sense seemed doubly keen: how full I heard  
A lark’s song, dropping from a loftier height  
Than ever before; and even the overmuch  
Oppressive hawthorn-scents,—and how I saw  
The bridal-favors at your horses’ ears  
A long half mile off—”

“If it comes to that,  
I knew the moment when your eye first caught

Sight of our carriages; you stopped to take  
The hedge-rose offered by the cottage-girl—”

“Yes!—with the ‘fair good morrow,’ that I thought  
So fortunate an omen—”

“That you gave  
It me before our greeting,—I remember!  
I have it yet, prest ’twixt our wedding-cards,  
To show to Madge, when she is old enough:—”

“And I,—you know the box of sandal-wood  
That holds my dear dead mother’s tress of hair,  
And other precious things:—this golden key  
Here on my chain unlocks it;—Well, beneath  
Those packages of lavender’d letters, tied  
With ribbon fresh a dozen years ago,  
I hide with jealous care, a torn, white glove.  
Do you forget, that as we stood together  
One moment in the porch of Thorncliffe Church,  
Just ere we walked the aisle,—you strove to draw  
Your glove with tremulous fingers on your hand,  
And rent it piteously? A pretty passion  
It was to watch!”

“O, ay,—I see it all!  
You, looking down in your seigneurial calm,

On the close-hooded falcon at your wrist,  
For whom the jess was fastening !”

—“Mock on so !

I love to feel the flutter of your wings  
Under my hand, full conscious all the while,  
That did I spread it wide and bid you fly,  
I could not shake you from your chosen perch.  
Yet say,—the truth bears thousand repetitions,—  
Say that you would not, were the power vouchsafed,  
Stand in your still unclaimed and girlish grace  
Free, in the porch of Thorncliffe Church again.”

“So would not I:—For me these years have wrought  
To their full round all woman’s experiences,—  
Wifehood most blessed,—precious motherhood :  
And so with leave to choose, I would not be,  
From queen to peasant, aught else than what I am.  
And yet the gift of gifts is youth : I scarce  
Was twenty then—”

“And twenty cannot be  
Full-sunned, heart-savour’d, mellow as thirty-two.  
For youth’s acerbities can set the teeth  
At times on edge,—its alternating airs  
Of gust and calm, most easy to be borne  
By lovers in patient faith, may yet become  
Siroccos unto husbands ;—its weak gauge

Of life and life's significant loveliness,  
Be reconciliation for the easy loss  
Of tendril-graces that climb about the heart,  
And smother it with over-flush of bloom.  
Give me then, summer with the sheen of spring,—  
The tropic fruit, inclusive of the flower,—  
Noon with the dew still on it,—progressive years,  
With childhood's zest,—an 't please you, thirty-two!

“But see,—the veil of woven gold pales off  
The sunset hills; and now before our Madge  
Comes clamoring for her nightly cradle-song,  
Or Harry with his tangled paradigms  
Beseeches furtherance with *amo*,—*amare*,—  
Let loose your fingers on the ivory keys,  
And—sing the snatch I scribbled you yesterday.”

“Fill the jewel-crusted beaker  
From the earliest vine;  
Gather grapes, ambrosia-fruited,  
And express their wine:

“Honey'd, lucent, amber-tinted;  
—Could old Massic shine  
With a foam whose beaded opals  
Sunnier globes enshrine?

“When did ivy-crown’d Bacchanté  
Warmer clusters twine  
Round a Ganymedian chalice?  
Yet these lips of mine

“Sometimes crave a racier vintage,—  
Sometimes dare to pine  
For that wondrous, witching essence,  
Orient muscadine,—

“Balmed with immemorial richness,  
Like a royal line,—  
Such as slumbrous decades ripen  
Through their long decline.

“Hence then, young love’s pearl-rimm’d flagon!  
Keep the pale-flusht wine;  
Earth it, till its juices fruiten—  
Till the lees refine;—

“Till each tinge of harshness mellows,—  
Till all sweets combine  
To prepare a draught quintessent,  
Rapturous, pure, divine!”



## A YEAR IN HEAVEN.

### I.

A YEAR uncalendar'd ;—for what  
Hast thou to do with mortal time?  
Its dole of moments entereth not  
That circle, infinite, sublime,  
Whose unreach'd centre is the throne  
Of Him before whose awful brow  
Meeting eternities are known  
As but an everlasting *Now*!  
The thought uplifts thee far away,—  
Too far beyond my love and tears;  
Ah, let me hold thee as I may,  
And count thy time by earthly years.

### II.

A year of blessedness, wherein  
No faintest cloud hath crost thy soul;  
No throe of pain, no taint of sin,  
No frail mortality's control:

Nor once hath disappointment stung,  
Nor care, world-weary, made thee pine;  
But rapture such as human tongue  
Hath found no language for, is thine.  
Made perfect at thy passing,—who  
Dare sum thine added glory now,  
As onward, upward,—pressing through  
The ranks that with veiled faces bow,—  
Ascending still from height to height,  
Fearless where, hush'd, the seraphs trod,  
Unfaltering midst the circles bright,  
Thou tendest inward unto God?

## III.

A year of progress in the lore  
That is not learned on earth: Thy mind,  
Unclogged of clay, and free to soar,  
Hath left the realms of doubt behind.  
And mysteries which thy finite thought  
In vain essayed to solve, appear  
To thine untasked inquiries fraught  
With explanation strangely clear.  
Thy reason owns no forced control  
As held it here in needful thrall,  
God's secrets court thy questioning soul,  
And thou may'st search and know them all.

## IV.

A year of love ;—Thy yearning heart  
Was always tender even to tears,  
And sympathy's responsive art  
Lent its warm coloring to thy years :  
But love whose wordless ecstasy  
Had overborne the finite,—now  
Throbs through thy saintly purity,  
And burns upon thy dazzling brow.  
For thou the hands' dear clasp hast felt  
That show the nail-prints still displayed,  
And thou before the face hast knelt  
That wears the scars the thorns have made.

## .V.

A year without thee :—I had thought  
My orphan'd heart would break and die,  
Ere time had meek quiescence wrought,  
Or soothed the tears it could not dry.  
And yet I live,—to faint, to groan,  
To stagger with the woe I bear,  
To miss thee so !—to moan and moan  
The name I dare not breathe in prayer !  
Thou praising,—while I weakly pine,—  
Enraptured,—while I sorrow sore,—  
And thus betwixt thy soul and mine  
The distance widening evermore !

## VI.

A year of tears to me ;—to thee,  
The end of thy probation's strife,  
The archway to eternity,  
The portal of thy deathless life :  
To me,—the corse, the bier, the sod,—  
To thee,—the palm of victory given :  
Enough, my bruised heart !—Thank God  
That thou *hast* been a year in heaven !

## AFTERNOON.

### I.

You say the years have sadder grown  
Beneath their weight of care and duty,—  
That all the festive grace has flown  
That garlanded their earlier beauty.

### II.

You tell me Hope no more can daze  
Your vision with her bland delusions;  
Nor Fancy, versed in subtle ways,  
Seduce you to her gay conclusions.

### III.

The rapturous throb,—the bound,—the flush,  
That made all life one strong sensation,  
Grow quiet now beneath the hush  
Of time's profounder revelation.

## IV.

You have it still, the inviolate past,  
So pure from all illusive glitter,—  
So luminous-clear from first to last,  
With scarce the needful dash of bitter.

## V.

*Vixi* :—Thus, looking back, you write ;  
The best that life can give, you've tasted ;  
And drop by drop, translucent, bright,  
You've sipped and drained ;—not one is wasted.

## VI.

Yet not in retrospect your eye  
Alone sees pathways pied with flowers ;  
You knew, the while the hours flew by,  
They were supremely blissful hours.

## VII.

The sun slopes slowly westering still,  
Behind you now your shadow lengthens,  
And in the vale beneath the hill  
The evening's growing purple strengthens.

## VIII.

The morning mists that swam your eye,  
Too vaguely wrapped your young ideal :

Now,—cut against your clearer sky,  
You comprehend the true—the real.

IX.

Life still has joys that do not pall,  
Love still has hours serene and tender:  
'Tis afternoon, dear! . . . that is all!  
And this is afternoon's calm splendor.

X.

God grant your cloudless orb may run  
Long, golden cycles ere we sever;  
Or, like the northern midnight-sun,  
Circle with light my heart for ever!

## POOR CARLOTTA.

THE scion of immemorial lines,  
August with histories hoary,  
Whose grand, imperial heirship shines  
With the starriest names of story,—  
Stands doomed to die:—and the grenadiers  
In serried and silent column,  
Their pitiless eyes half-hazed with tears,  
Are waiting the signal solemn.

The brave young Emperor lifts his brow,—  
It never has shown so regal;  
Yet it is not the pride of the Hapsburg now,  
Nor the glance of the clefted eagle.  
No blazing coronet binds his head,  
No ermined purple is round him;  
But his manhood's majesty instead  
With royaller rank has crowned him.

An instant's space he is caught away  
To Schönbrunn's peaceful bowers;



There's a lightning-dazzle of boyhood's day,  
—Vienna's glittering towers  
Flash back with a mocking, blinding glare;  
—To barter such princely splendor,  
For wrecked ambition and stark despair,—  
Betrayal and base surrender!

Wild, infinite, taunting memories thrill  
His soul to its molten centre;  
Remorses that madden him, clamor still,  
But he will not let them enter.  
The grovelling traffic of time all done,  
He would have the temple lonely . . .  
Its sanctuaries emptied one by one,  
That God may fill it only.

But under the Austrian skies afar,  
Aglow with a light elysian,  
The mullion'd windows of Miramar  
Loom out on his tortured vision:  
He looks on its grey abeles again;  
He is threading its pleachéd alleys;  
He is guiding his darling's slacken'd rein,  
As they scour the dimpled valleys.

. . . He can gaze his last on the earth and sky,—  
Step forth to his doom, nor shiver,—

Eternity front his steadfast eye,  
And never a muscle quiver :  
But love's heart-rackings, despairs and tears  
Wrench the fixt lips asunder ;  
— '*My poor Carlotta !*'—Now, grenadiers,  
Your volley may belch its thunder !

## THE COMPLAINT OF SANTA CLAUS.

THE snow lies deep on the frozen ground,  
And the Christmas-night is cold,  
And I shiver before the rime so hoar,—  
Can it be I am growing old?

Long years ago, when the Christmas chimes  
Made merry the midnight sky;  
When the carollers' call filled house and hall,  
And wassail and mirth ran high;—

When harlequin mummers reveled and danced,  
And the great Yule-log blazed bright;—  
And the walls were green with a summer sheen,  
In holly and yew bedight;—

When the faces of all, the young, the old,  
Were brimming with sparkling cheer,—  
Ay, those were the times when Christmas chimes  
Were the merriest sounds of the year!

I snapped my fingers in Jack Frost's teeth,  
While the snow was wavering down,  
And the icicles flung from my beard that hung,  
—My beard that was then so brown,—

And I wrapped myself in my grizzly coat,  
And lit my pipe with a coal  
From Hecla's crest, where I stopped to rest  
On my way from the Northern Pole.

My reindeers—O they were brisk and gay!  
My sledge, it could stand a pull;  
My pack though great, seemed a feather's weight,  
No matter how crammed and full.

My heart, it was stout in those good old days,  
And warm with an inward glee;  
For I thought of the mirths of a thousand hearths,  
Where the little ones watched for me.

So I gathered my sweets from far and near,  
And I piled my cunningest toys,  
(Unheeding the swirls) for the innocent girls,  
And the rollicking, roguish boys.

But the times have sobered and changed since then,  
My merriment flags forlorn; .

My beard is as white as on Christmas-night  
Of old was the Glaston thorn.

Though my wither'd lips still hold the pipe,  
No longer the smoke-wreath curls;  
But saddest to see of sights for me,  
—My frolicsome boys and girls

Have grown so knowing they dare to say—  
These Protestants wise and small,—  
That all saints deceive, and they don't believe  
In a *Santa Claus* at all!

Ah me! 'Tis a fateful sound to hear;  
'Tis gall in my wassail-cup:  
The darlings I've spoiled, so wrought-for and toiled,  
The children have given me up!

My heart is broken;—I'll break my pipe,  
And my tinkling team may go,  
And bury my sledge on the trackless edge  
Of a Lapland waste of snow.

My useless pack I will fling away,  
And in Germany's forests hoar,  
From the icy steep I will plunge leagues deep,  
And never be heard of more.

## UNREASON.

### I.

WHEN the far port is neared at last,  
And underneath the storm-tost feet  
That trod the deck through Tropics' heat,  
And Norland winter's iciest blast,  
The firm, sure earth is anchored fast,—  
We give the voyager "All hail!"  
• Thou,—anchored safe within the veil,  
Chide not, because athwart the foam  
That beats betwixt me and thy home,  
Weeping to miss thy vanished sail,  
I find no voice to cry—"All hail!"

### II.

Shall he who wrought with tireless hands,  
That only slackened when the seed,  
Sown with such self-contemning heed,  
Seemed but to parch on barren sands,  
Not shout the harvest-home, when bands  
Of reapers dot the meadow-lands?

Thou,—with thy bosom filled with sheaves,  
Gathered through toiling morns and eves,  
May'st see me glean adust, behind,  
Sore-sad of heart that thou shalt bind  
Never again the summer sheaves.

## III.

When some dear exile whose sharp pain  
Of banishment we've sickened o'er,  
Is free to seek his patriot shore,  
And where his childhood's cheek hath lain,  
Sobs out his crazy joy again,—  
Who weeps for grief?—I, even I!  
—The wanderer finds his native sky,  
The sower counts his garner'd grain,  
The banished hails his home again,  
Glad,—thankful,—rapturous: Yet, I sigh  
Inconsolate,—yea, even I!

## THE LEGEND OF ATHELNEY.

ONE desolate, chill December,  
—'Twas hundreds of years ago,—  
The moors and the marish fen-lands  
Were dreary and waste with snow :

And fiercely the wolfish tempest  
Howled on the rock-ribb'd shore,  
And the heart of the Saxon people  
Was numb to the inmost core.

For the noble and good King Alfred,  
Whose prowess and toils and pains  
Had shielded and kept the kingdom,  
And banished the cruel Danes,—

Discomfited now and reaven  
Of province and royal stead,  
A nameless fugitive wandered  
Seeking his daily bread.



—'Twas a Yule-tide eve ; and the fagots  
That blazed on the earthen floor,  
Flung over the bleak morasses  
A glint through the low-brow'd door ;—

A glint that across the levels  
Flared like a cresset-light,  
That beacons belated footsteps  
Over the drifts of white.

Cowering beside the embers,  
The King of the Saxon land  
Read from the sacred Gospel  
Holden within his hand :—

Read how the Eastern mages  
Found in the oxen's stall  
Jesus the son of Mary,  
The Lord and the King of all ;—

Read of the Bethlehem shepherds,—  
Of the strange and marvellous sights  
That greeted their upturned faces  
That first of the Christmas-nights.

And the heart of the King was melted,  
And he uttered a lonely sigh ;

“A Prince,—yet a houseless exile,—  
An outcast,—even as I!”

But still as he pondered the pages,  
Or ever he was aware,  
This tenderest Christmas-story  
Softened his sharp despair.

With a cheerier look he lifted  
His eyes from the beaten floor,  
And behold, a gaunt-limb'd beggar  
Sought alms at the wide-set door.

—“Now what is there for bestowal?  
Good mother, beseech thee, see;  
For sore is the need that seeketh  
The succor of Athelney.”

And the goodwife answered quickly,  
“There is left no dole to make,  
Nor a crumb of bread remaineth,  
Save only an oaten cake.

“And the henchmen who seek the forest  
Athwart the dismal wold,  
May fail of the wished-for quarry,  
Or perish amid the cold:

“And belike we shall starve, my master—”

“Good mother, I pray, not so!

Who findeth the finch his berries

When they’re hidden beneath the snow?

“I read in the holy Gospel,—

With the story mine eyes are dim,—

That for *us* our Lord left heaven;

Is there naught we may do for *Him*?

“When we know that the cruse is empty,

And hungry and faint, we feel

’Twixt us and death there is only

A morsel of scanty meal,—

“*Then* is the season for giving;

And so, for the Lord’s sweet sake,

Succor His needy kinsman,

Break him the oaten cake:

“Looking to Him to feed us,

Sure that the deed is right;

Thankful an act of mercy

Can hallow our Christmas-night.”

—As asleep on his goat-skin pillow

Next morn King Alfred lay,

He dreamed that he talked with Jesus,  
And he hearkened and heard Him say;—

“Now honor be thine, and blessing  
And power and great degree;  
Inasmuch to the least thou didst it,  
Thou didst it even to me.”

And when in the wintry gloaming  
The dreamer unclosed his eyes,  
The vision that met them, filled them  
With a mist of glad surprise.

For there lay on the floor full-antler'd,  
A buck in his fairest prime:  
So, with plenty and cheer right royal,  
They welcomed the Christmas-time.

—When spring from the daisied pastures  
Had routed the leaden gloom,  
And the reaches of sedgy fen-land  
Were green with the gorse and broom,—

At the head of a new-found army  
King Alfred rode amain,  
And hunted from court and castle  
The fierce marauding Dane.

And he hid in his heart the lesson,  
Midst the pride of his high degree,  
Which the Christmas-tide had taught him  
In the fens of Athelney.

M

## ALL'S WELL.

“Post number one:—‘*All’s well.*’ Post number two:—‘*All’s well.*’ And so the assuring cry goes the circuit of the camp.”—*Officer’s Note-Book.*

“ALL’S WELL”—How the musical sound  
Smites, surge-like, the slumbering ear,  
As the sentinel paces his round,  
And carols his tidings of cheer!  
Half-startled, the soldier awakes,  
Recalling his senses that roam:  
—’Tis only a moment it breaks  
On the dream he was dreaming of home:  
“*All’s well!*”

“*All’s well!*”—Through the lengthening lines  
Each sentry re-echoes the word,  
And faintly yon forest of pines  
With dreamy responses is stirred:

On the marge of the nebulous night,  
A wavy, reiterate sigh,  
It ripples,—then vanishes quite  
In the infinite deeps of the sky:

“*All's well!*”

“*All's well!*”—In the warfare of life  
Does my soul like a sentinel stand,  
Prepared to encounter the strife,  
With well-burnish'd weapon in hand?  
While the senses securely repose,  
And doubt and temptation have room,  
Does the keen ear of conscience unclose?  
Does she listen, and catch through the gloom:

“*All's well!*”

“*All's well!*”—Can I echo the word?  
Does faith with a sleepless control  
Bid the peaceful assurance be heard  
In the questionless depths of my soul?  
Then fear not, frail heart!—when the scars  
Of the brave-foughten combat are past,  
Clear voices that fall from the stars  
Will quiet thee on to the last:

“*All's well!*”

## THE SCHOLAR'S HAUNTS.

### I.

WHEN the dreaming scholar ponders  
O'er the wondrous tomes of yore,  
Till his mind bewildered wanders,  
And his dazed eye heeds no more ;—

### II.

When with forces spent and jaded,  
And with senses overstrained ;  
Foiled, eluded and upbraided  
By the phantom-goal ungained ;—

### III.

When the fever'd spirit flutters  
In some tangled labyrinth caught,  
Conscious that the thought it utters  
Leaves unsaid the higher thought ;—



IV.

Let him close the misty volume,  
And the crabbéd page of eld;  
Life has many a worthier column  
In its unread archives held.

V.

Searching after buried treasures,  
At his feet he overlooks  
Simpler wisdom, sweeter pleasures  
Than are prest away in books.

VI.

Not in mansion'd streets whose crowded  
Human tides go roaring by;  
Where the brows he meets are clouded,  
And eye answers not to eye:

VII.

Not where false and garish graces  
Mock him with their gilden shows,—  
Where unspiritual faces  
Flaunt the lily and the rose:

VIII.

Not where avarice turns its neighbor  
Coldly from the half-shut door;

Not where grind the wheels of labor,  
Can he learn this fresher lore.

## IX.

Let him seek the wooded alleys  
Where the flocking ferns abide,  
Let him pace the cloistral valleys  
Where the bluest gentians hide:—

## X.

Read the lichen-missal'd ledges,—  
Scan the log-books of the streams,—  
Till, with thought a-sail, the sedges  
Float him to the land of dreams:

## XI.

Mid the forest-porches linger,  
Conning Nature's curious art,  
Near enough to lay his finger  
On the pulses of her heart.

## XII.

What a tranquil, chasten'd beating!  
Good and ill *there* wage no strife,  
Such as surges 'twixt the meeting  
Ebbs and flows of human life.

XIII.

Here he'll breathe the strengthening essence  
Of a purer, loftier clime ;  
Here he'll learn sublimer lessons  
Than from all the stores of Time.

## UNDER THE ELMS.

“So sad it is,”—she said,—and sat her down  
In the old seat;—“So more than sad, to take  
For guide, pale Memory, and retrace again  
With her, the paths the trailing years have worn;  
And in the haunted spots she points us out,  
Wait to recount who sat beside us there,  
And listen while she tells us of the Hours  
That trooped before us hand in hand with Joy.

“How freshly to my sight they stand again,  
Those dear companions of my morning-time,  
In the familiar spots! I seem to hear  
Like a refrain, chime silverly their laughter,  
In rhythmic chorus to their tuneful-hearts:  
The youth with quenchless purpose in his eye;  
The heyday girl, her grace but half unmasked;  
The kind old man whose hands seemed always stretched  
In benediction,—matron’d womanhood,

And gay-eyed, flossy-headed little ones.  
I turn to clasp them each, but my strain'd arms  
On phantasms close; and only then I find  
'Twas a mirage that Memory had evoked  
Wherewith to tantalize my crazy vision.  
And then upon my cheated heart comes back  
With sense too real, that saddest consciousness,  
That *only* thus can I behold again,—  
Ever again, the faces that are gone!

“Mysteriously,”—she sighed—“an unseen hand  
Cuts at a stroke the thousand precious cords  
Whose twisting Love had labored at for years.  
And they who seemed a portion of ourselves,  
Whose eyes glassed back to us our very thoughts,  
Whose souls we knew by heart, as holy psalms  
Learned from our mother's lips,—are loosed away,  
Snatched out of sight: and in the agony  
And rupture, we forget to look aloft,  
Where the freed spirit has cleaved the open sky,—  
Hugging instead, the cage it left behind.

“And so,”—she said—“for balming of my heart,  
Next it I'll lay this truth: That God's dear hand,  
That spares to waste the smallest filament  
Of beauty that redeems the leaden hue

Of this too-gravely-textur'd weft of ours,  
Will gather together at last these golden strands  
And weave them, in His marvellous tenderness,  
Into the garments that we wear above."

## ANTONIO ORIBONI.

### I.

IN grey Spielberg's dreary fortress, buried from the light  
of day,  
From the bounteous, liberal sunshine, and the prodigal  
breeze's play,—  
Where no human sounds could reach him, save the  
mocking monotones  
Of the sentinel whose footsteps trod the dismal court-  
yard stones—  
Lay the young and knightly victim of the Austrian  
despot's law,  
Worn with slow, consuming sickness, on his meagre  
bed of straw.

### II.

Oft he strove to press his forehead with his pallid hand,  
in vain,  
For the wrist so thin and pulseless could not lift the  
burdening chain :

Though his lips were parched to frenzy, while the  
    quenchless fever raged,  
They had halved the stint of water, lest his thirst  
    might be assuaged;  
And because his morbid hunger loathed the mouldy  
    food they thrust  
Through the gratings of his dungeon, they had even  
    withheld the crust.

## III.

Snatched from country, home and kindred, from his  
    immemorial sky  
Rich with summer's lavish leafage, they had flung him  
    here to die;  
Not because through perjur'd witness they had stained  
    his noble name,  
Not because their jealous malice could adduce one deed  
    of shame;—  
But he learned to think that freedom was a guerdon  
    cheaply bought  
By the lives of slaughter'd heroes, and . . . he dared  
    to speak the thought!

## IV.

And for this,—for *this* they thrust him where no arm  
    might reach to save,  
And with youth's hot pulses thronging, sunk him in a  
    living grave:



Strove to stifle in a dungeon under piled centurial  
stone,  
Titan-thoughts whose heaving shoulders might upturn  
the tyrant's throne ;  
—Mother-land ! thou heard'st his groaning, and for  
every tear he poured,  
Thou hast summoned forth a hero, armed with Free-  
dom's vengeful sword !

## V.

Through the dragging years he wasted,—for the flesh  
will still succumb,  
Though the inexorable spirit hold the lips sublimely  
dumb,—  
And he yearned to clasp his brothers,—enter the old  
trellised door,—  
Fall upon his mother's bosom,—kiss his father's hand  
once more,  
Till he murmured, as the vision swam before his fever-  
ish eye,—  
“O to hear their pitying voices break in blessings ere  
I die !

## VI.

“Thou who shrank'st with human shrinking, even as I,  
and thrice did'st pray  
If 't were possible the anguish from Thy lips might  
pass away—

Lift this maddening, torturing pressure, seal this struggling, panting breath,—  
Let *Thy* mercy cheat man's vengeance,—lead me out to peace through death:  
Rend aside this fleshy fastness, shiver this soul-cankering strife,  
Turn the key, Thou Blesséd Warder,—break the cruel bolt of life !”

## VII.

—In the deep and ghostly midnight, as the lonely captive lay  
Gasping in the silent darkness, longing for the dusk of day,  
Burst a flood of light celestial through the rayless prison-cell,  
And an angel hovering o'er him, toucht his shackles,—and they fell ;  
And the wondering, trancéd spirit, every thrall of bondage past,  
Dropt the shatter'd chains that held it, and sprang upward,—freed at last.

## ARTIST-WORK.

### WIFE.

“THE theme includes a lesson I need to learn ;  
—Old Leonardo, with his grand grey head  
And patriarchal beard, day after day,  
Sitting within the Milan market-place,  
A-search among that humanest of crowds,  
To find some face that he might glorify  
With his rare art,—until the rustic hind  
Looked from his canvas, a divine Saint John.

“I’ll paint the portrait with Correggio’s charm  
Of light and shade ; the meditative brow  
Furrowed with thought,—the isolated air,—  
The impassive look that masks the life within,—  
Till the old Master lives upon my page,  
As once among these Milanese. About him  
I’ll group the common folk that come and go ;  
The brawny-arm’d, red-turban’d fisherman,—

The chestnut-vender, with his scowling glare,  
(A hint of Judas in his sinister eye)—  
The mother, who mild-fac'd, looks smiling down,  
A possible Madonna, on the child  
That grasps her finger:—innocent flower-maidens,  
And gossips rusty as the wares they sell.

“’Twas genius beckoned (I’ll show) when Leonardo  
Behind him shut, left on the cold, dead wall,—  
The forms for which his querulous fancy found  
No models, and sought along life’s beaten paths  
New source of power. I’ll make it clear, that he,  
Who with unwise, self-centred introspection,  
Paints from the airy beings of his brain,  
Fails, and is never loyal to the truth;—  
That whoso would know aught of Nature’s moods,  
Must bring his palette forth, and in clear day,  
Before her open face, match all his hues,—  
The pearly shades of cumulated clouds,  
The skyey spaces, tinct with changeful blue,  
The mountain dreaming on the horizon’s rim,  
And all sweet mysteries of this grey-green earth,  
Not learned beneath close roofs. Thus will I teach  
The lesson thumb’d so oft,—that we must look  
About our feet for fit material  
Wherewith to mould high theme;—that the strait life,  
Hemming us round, has rich suggestiveness,—

That even the homeliest office of the hour,  
If *duty* but refine and lift it up,  
Demanding for its terms of service, small  
Renunciations, strict self-disciplines,  
Compliances that thwart our inner wish,  
—Darling,—*you* there? Ah, I remember now . . .  
'The buttons!' My Poem, *Household Priestesses*,  
Detained me . . . Why, he's gone without a word!  
Below I hear him whistling to his dogs;  
Yonder he stops beneath the apple-tree,  
Jacket unbutton'd, and his voice drifts thither;  
—What is he singing?"

HUSBAND.

“Carolling lark, so high, so high,  
Swallowed in sky,—  
Floating a fairy, airy mote,  
Earthward dropping a liquid note,  
Flutily clear,  
Such as it ravishes hearts to hear;  
Out of sight, as a star withdrawn  
Into the dawn,—  
Blotted away from mortal view,  
Drowned in limitless voids of blue,  
Never to be  
Aught but a creature of air to me!

Never to stoop from flight so broad,  
                                Down to the sod  
Where you fashioned a grassy nest;  
'Tis too lowly a place of rest:  
                                Twitterers there,  
Chirp, but you heed not, high in air.

Tame little blue-bird, piping sweet,  
                                Here at my feet,  
Merrily chirruping all day long  
Only for *me*: With such a song  
                                Wherefore should I  
Care for the warble that floods the sky!"

## WIFE.

"Yes,—so man puts it!—Let *him* be the lark  
To spring straight upward from the trampled grass,  
To fan the dampness from his outstretcht wings,  
To leave the wrangling fledglings far below,  
And, full abreast the rapturous air, to soar  
Unhindered,—wasting all his fervid soul  
Upon the heedless breeze; and when, well-tired,  
To drop down slowly to the clover-nest,  
Where all the hours his mate has fed their brood  
In patient love, oblivious of the sky  
Or air, or sun!—And who so bold as dare

Make question of the fitnesses of things?  
Yet, as true woman and wife, I would far rather  
Be a brown sparrow pecking from his hand,  
If so it please him best, than even entrance  
A thousand other listeners with my song.

“But what, my little scholar? . . . Sigh you too  
Over lost buttons?”

CHILD.

“Mother, I am come to ask  
That you’ll help me to decline  
These ‘*exceptions*.’ Such a task!  
And I cannot read a line.

“What does ‘*hoc officium*’ mean?  
Here is ‘*facere—to do*;  
With this verb that comes between  
'Tis a puzzle to construe.

“And this mythologic stuff;  
What’s the good of it, to know  
How ill-natur’d, odious, gruff,  
Those old gods were long ago?

“Then these sums,—they vex me yet,—  
Rule of Two, or Rule of Three,

Which is proper?—I forget,  
For it's quite all one to me.

“What's an equinoctial line?  
What's a zone,—a parallel?  
Mother dear, will you define?  
For I'm sure *I* cannot tell!”

MOTHER.

“Come hither, child, and let me kiss all smooth  
Those whimpering lips! They win me back again  
From the inane ambitions I have nursed,  
To graver, holier, purer ministrations  
Than service of art. They teach, that cloister'd  
thought,  
Hours winnowed of care, soft-cultur'd, studious ease,  
Days hedged from interruption, and withdrawn  
Inviolable from household exigence,—  
Are not for women,—and least for wives and mothers;  
That Leonardo-like, they still must sit  
Amidst the jostling stir of clamorous life,  
And catch suggestions of the beautiful,  
For Love, true Artist, to idealize  
In living frescoes on the walls of home.”



## LEFT BEHIND.

### I.

I CANNOT chide away the pain,—  
I cannot bid the throb be still,  
That aches and aches through heart and brain,  
And leaves them pulsing to the thrill  
Of overmastering memories. They  
Who never saw the eyelids close,  
Beneath whose shadowing fringes lay  
All that had given to life repose,  
Or charm, or hope, or ease, or joy,  
Or love clear molten from alloy,—  
Who have not, tear-blind, watched the breath  
That only breathed to bless them, come  
Slower and fainter, till the dumb  
Unanswering lips grew white with death,—  
*They* cannot know, by grief untaught,  
What an unfathomed depth I find,  
Of ebbless anguish in the thought  
That I am left behind.

## II.

What matters it that other eyes  
Have smiles to give me just as sweet,  
Or softly other tongues repeat  
Endearments of as gentle guise?  
I only feel that whatsoe'er  
Its melting tenderness may be,  
'Tis not the smile whose gracious 'cheer  
Was more than all the world to me:  
I only feel though winning-kind  
Is every word that voice may say,  
'Tis not the one that passed away  
When I was left behind.

## III.

I know,—I know that as of yore,  
Nature is festive in her mirth;  
That still the sunshine shimmers through  
The infinite, palpitating blue,  
As goldenly as heretofore:  
I know this green and billowy earth  
Tides underneath the smile of God,  
As to the moonlight tides the sea;  
—I'm wounded by the mocking glee,  
I'm hurt by all the joy abroad.

The smiting blow that grief has given,  
So jars the mirror of my mind,  
That everything of sweet or fair,  
Has but distorted reflex there;  
And O the tears,—the tears, like rain  
Upon its surface leave their stain,  
Since my Belovéd went to heaven,  
Since I was left behind!

## IV.

There is a Hand that can restore  
The spirit's equipoise, till true,  
In faith's unwavering light once more,  
His image trembles back to view.  
Dear Christ!—when there Thy form appears,  
Let me not blot it with my tears,  
That are not murmuring tears, though sad;  
I would be patient,—I would find  
How much the thought can reconcile,  
Can lift me up and make me glad,  
That only for a little while  
Shall I be left behind.

## THE BELLS OF BRIENNE.\*

THE setting sun was slanting red  
Across the battle plain,  
As slackening bit, the Emperor  
Surveyed the heaps of slain.

He gazed with hard, impassive eye  
Upon the carnage spread,  
Nor made account of dying moans,  
Nor saw the piled-up dead.

No thought of thousand widow'd wives  
Awoke remorseful fear;  
No sobs of wailing orphans filled  
His apathetic ear.

—'Twas but the common fate of war,  
Whose tempest-shock of wrath

\* Napoleon was educated at the military school of Brienne.

Foredoomed that human wreck and waste  
Must strew the conqueror's path.

If million lives alone sufficed  
To rear the pile so high  
That he might climb to boundless power,  
—Then let the million die.

A-sudden, broke a peal of bells,  
Startling the feverish air,  
That clanged across the bloody field  
The vesper-call to prayer.

The victor in his saddle drooped  
With quick, spasmodic start,  
As if a whizzing random shot  
Had smote him at the heart.

Those bells! . . . What long-forgotten hours,  
What careless school-boy times,  
What rush of innocent happiness,  
All mocked him in their chimes!

And who dare say, as contrast sharp  
Pierced with its stab of pain,—  
He had not given crown,—empire,—all,  
To be a boy again!

For when he turned erect once more,  
To praise the cannoniers  
Who won the fight that day,—they saw  
His cheek was wet with tears.

## PROEM.

TO "SILVERWOOD—A BOOK OF MEMORIES."

TURNING tearfully the pages  
Of the By-gone's blotted lore,  
—Palimpsests o'erwrit with records  
Of the luminous heretofore;

Records where a gleam of brightness,  
Through the fresher sorrow shines;  
Records with a throb of heart-break  
Troubling all the wavering lines;

I have gathered of the beauty  
That emblazons still the book,  
Here, some grace's half-blurr'd outline,—  
There, some hint of tone or look:

Transcripts, ah, how faint, Belovéd!  
Dim suggestions of that rare  
Inner realm the world around you  
Never knew was hidden there.

Like the spies of old, I've entered,  
Searching all the richest parts,  
Bringing back some grapes of Eshcol  
From the Canaan of your hearts.

For I need the wine of solace  
Which their vintage-tide supplies,—  
Need the omer's strengthening manna  
Meted to me from the skies.

Sad, behind the wains full-laden,  
Memory, like a gleaner, strives  
Thus to gather up a handful  
From the harvest of your lives.

Seeking in her tender patience,  
Through the corn-land's cast-off leaves,  
Golden grains of sweet refreshment  
Shaken from the garner'd sheaves.

If she has not filled her bosom  
With the wealth of ripened ears,  
'Twas because her eyes were clouded,  
And she could not see for tears!



## LITTLE JEANIE'S SLEEP.

. . . How tired she was growing!—It may be  
God pitied so tender a sight,  
And whispered,—“You’re weary, my baby,  
So shut your sweet eyes, and good-night!”

And she shut them. Be sure that our Father  
Who guards every step that they tread,  
Knows better than we when to gather  
The little tired sleepers to bed.

And lying there now, midst the rarest  
Of jasmines and snow-drops so white,  
Herself the delightsomest, fairest  
That ever unsheathed in our sight,—

Midst the blossoms she loved in such fashion  
As God loves, proclaiming them “good,”—  
In your hunger of ravenous passion,  
Would you wake her to life,—if you could?

If out the blue glory above you,  
The voice of the Highest were heard,  
“One word,—and you have her to love you  
Again,” . . . would you utter the word?

Nay, never! The perfected seven  
Sweet years of her sojourn below,  
Were balmed with the breezes of heaven,  
But would it have always been so?

Like the silverest sunbeam of morning  
Your hearts through her promise were blest;  
Would you hazard the tokens of warning  
That point to the clouds in the west?

O say it was well, ere the splendor  
Of her dawning had died into grey,  
While the rose-dew of childhood was tender,  
She should glide through the arches of day.

O say that her sleep is *not* dreary:  
It only was kindest and best,  
That her Father who saw she was weary,  
Should wrap her the sooner to rest.

## THE UNATTAINED.

THE loftiest-soaring thoughts that ever find  
Within our souls their transient nestling-place,  
Elude most subtly the detaining grasp  
Wherewith gross speech would hold them.

Oftentimes

Through the pure æther of our silent souls  
The warble swells, scarce audible, scarce perceived,  
Yet circling still with clearer utterance  
Lower and nearer, till it drops straight down  
Into our heart. And then in eager haste  
To keep our lark a captive fast, that so  
Some other ear may hear what we have heard,  
We plait a cage about with nicest art,—  
We net the very goldenest of our gyves,  
And all being done, feel after the rare singer,  
When lo, 'tis gone! Full consciously secure,  
We tarried overlong, and the quick thought,  
Too airy for our snare, has safe escaped;  
And far receding, high above and higher,

Through the mind's radiant atmosphere, we catch  
What evermore we fail to others' sense  
To make articulate. Some ruffled down  
Snatched all too rudely from the silvery breast,—  
Some feather azure-tipt, caught from the wings  
Spread out of sight, alone are left to prove  
The presence of the singer in our souls.

## THE HALLOWED NAME.

### I.

A THOUSAND times I've rung it out  
With laughter's lightest tone ;  
And heard it tossed from lip to lip  
As jocund as my own :  
But now with hushing tenderness  
I fold and wrap it round,  
As if I grudged that air profane  
Should share the sacred sound.

### II.

If unawares it strikes my ear,  
Beneath the blow I start ;  
And swift, concentric thrills suffuse  
The quiet of my heart :  
All other visions break before  
That circle's widening sway,  
Till on the outmost bourn of tears  
My memories melt away.

### III.

O love that flung it, music-fraught,  
Upon the zestful air,—

O grief that sobs it with the slow,  
Awed sanctity of prayer,—  
Ye know I may not moan it forth  
With less of reverent breath  
Than trembles o'er the mouth we kiss,  
Made consecrate by death!

## IV.

Within a far-off place of graves,  
Midst other names unknown,  
Strange eyes behold it lettered out  
On love's memorial stone:  
*They* syllable with questioning lips  
The simple, brief-drawn line;  
But through what gusts of voiceless tears  
It had been kissed by mine.

## V.

Yet on a tablet deeper cut,  
I keep that silent word,  
Which in the haunts of living men  
Shall nevermore be heard:  
Too pure for common uses,—raised  
High o'er all praise or blame:  
Yea,—since they've learned it up in heaven,  
It *is* a hallowed name!

## DANTE IN EXILE.

“What wilt thou?” asked the Prior: and the stranger looking steadfastly at him only answered, “*Peace.*”

PEACE for the exile banished from his home,  
Familiar kindred, and dear native land?—  
Peace for the man whose birth-soil roots him out  
With scoffs, and flings him like a noxious weed  
To shrivel and scorch in sultry heats of scorn.  
Yea,—even for *him*; if that his fiery soul  
Can find in wholesome and indignant hate,  
A nutriment whose bitter strength can still  
All gentler cravings. But no “peace” for thee,  
O Poet, with thy marvellous organism,  
Sweet as Ravenna’s rathest summer-rose,—  
Soft as a rivulet mid Arezzo’s hills;  
Yet stern and rugged as the hard-bol’d fir,  
Or blasting as Vesuvius, belching fire;  
With thine austere and virile soul, attempered  
With woman-like lovingness, and thy great heart

Thy strong, heroic, melancholy heart,  
In its refinement of ecstatic pain  
Evermore quivering ;—ah, no “peace” for thee !

No alien fields of blue could ever seem  
As living as thine own Etrurian skies :  
No stream could wake, how bright soe’er its flash,  
The grave, still joy that thy young years had known  
By silvery Arno :—never city show  
Such queenliness of proud magnificence,  
As beautiful Florence lying like a bride  
In the caresses of her oliv’d hills.  
Yet *she* could thrust thee out,—yet she could bear  
To bind thy chivalrous spirit to the rack  
Of most ingenious torture, till thy life  
Of heart-break wore at last away : And thou  
Couldst grandly tame thy seething nature down,  
And with superb forgiveness,—such as saints  
Learn only in heaven,—still love her with a love  
Inordinate, quenchless, unappeasable,  
Throughout the eating years of martyrdom !

She could not take thine all. Though sad athirst  
For sympathies gracious as had once refreshed  
Thy Tuscan home,—thou hadst a secret spring,  
Healing, exhaustless, whence thy royal soul  
Drew strength and solace midst its harshest woes :



And even in thy most desolate poverty  
Of hope and comfort, thou, with affluent hand,  
Didst pour from that divinest fount of song,  
Delicious waters, that were evermore  
To be *her* pride who scorned thee!

But the stream,  
The deep, pure, living Hippocrene that sends  
Down the long ages, draughts that bear refreshment  
To myriads of hot lips,—could never cure  
Thine own home-sickness,—could not satisfy  
Thy harrowing yearnings. And the boon of peace  
Which thou hadst sought through lonely wanderings,—  
Through years of aching banishment, in vain,  
Thy haunted heart found only in the grave.

## THE VISION OF THE SNOW.

### I.

“SHE has gone to be with the angels;”  
So they had always said  
To the little questioner asking  
Of his fair, young mother, dead.

### II.

They never had told of the darkness  
Of the sorrowful-silent tomb,  
Nor scared the sensitive spirit  
By linking a thought of gloom

### III.

With the girl-like, beautiful being,  
Who patiently from her breast,  
Had laid him in baby-sweetness,  
To pass to her early rest.

IV.

And when he would lisp—"Where is she?"  
Missing the mother-kiss,  
They answered—"Away in a country  
That is lovelier far than this;

V.

"A land all a-shine with beauty  
Too pure for our mortal sight,  
Where the darling ones who have left us  
Are walking in robes of white."

VI.

And with eagerest face he would listen,  
His tremulous lips apart,  
Till the thought of the Beautiful Country  
Haunted his yearning heart.

VII.

—One morn, as he gazed from the window,  
A miracle of surprise,  
A marvellous, mystic vision  
Dazzled his wondering eyes.

VIII.

Born where the winter's harshness  
Is tempered with spring-tide glow,

The delicate Southern nursling  
Never had seen the snow.

## IX.

And clasping his childish fingers,  
He turned with a flashing brow,  
And cried—"We have got to heaven . . .  
Show me my mother now!"

## OUT OF THE SHADOW.

### I.

"LIFE is so beautiful,"—I said,  
    "In the young, misty morning's prime,  
    —And yours is just at blossom-time;  
The sparkles hang about your head,  
And all the gracious bounty shed  
    Lavish above your sixteen years,  
Wears its first freshness still; and yet,  
    Sweet daughter, have I seen no tears,  
Nor caught an unawares regret  
Deepening the softness of your eye,—  
Is it so easy, then, to die?"

### II.

(I always knew my darling's face  
Showed saintly through its utmost grace  
Of pure expression, but her brow  
Had something lambent round it now.)

### III.

"*If* life is beautiful,"—she said,  
    "Where everything its beauty mars,

What must it be above the stars,  
Where all its greatening powers are fed  
For evermore with angels' bread?  
And often, when I wake at night,  
And watch the sky in musings fond,  
Made to hide heaven, and yet so bright,  
I think . . . what must it be beyond?  
And I can scarce keep down the prayer  
Of inward longing to be there."

## IV.

(O sweet, child-love that did not mark  
The infinite vague of pathless dark  
That lay betwixt those leaping eyes  
And the home-windows in the skies!)

## V.

"Still,—life *is* beautiful,"—I said:  
"Even while I take the medicin'd cup  
God's hand hath mixed, and drink it up,—  
Even while with soul disquieted  
Through gnawing care and doubt and dread,  
Life still is beautiful! . . . and Death—  
How *can* Death seem an angel when  
He takes away my name and breath  
Out of the land of living men?  
O child, the faith is strong to save  
That makes such compact with the grave!"

## VI.

(A wondrous radiance glowed upon  
The mouth that closed to meet my kiss;  
Surely the glory that Saint John  
Beheld in Patmos, was like this!)

## VII.

“Still *Death* is beautiful,”—she said,  
“A beckoning seraph in whose arms  
I safer sink from all alarms,  
Than when, a frighten’d child, I fled  
And sobbed my fears and hid my head  
On your warm bosom. Mother sweet,  
My Lord hath broken His heart for me,  
That mine break not; then is it meet,  
That when His messenger should be  
Sent on the errand full of balm,  
—‘Come and be with me where I am!’  
I who have often longed to go,  
Should shrink to greet His servant so?”

## VIII.

(He came;—I felt she saw him stand  
Before her, in the pallid dawn;  
One eager start,—one outstretcht hand . . .  
And then I knew my child was gone!)

## THE DIFFERENCE.

### I.

A BIRD within the alders sang  
A rapturous song ;  
So tearful-sweet its quavers rang,  
Now soft,—now strong,—  
That on my ravisht ear the strain  
Began to ache,  
Till, wrung with too delicious pain,  
My heart did break.  
But when, obedient to the call  
That drew me on,  
I flew to own the mystic thrall  
Of the subduing madrigal,  
—The bird was gone !  
And from some other alder-bough  
His liquid throat  
Pours forth the grieving ripples now,  
That swell and float,  
And break with ecstasy divine  
Some heart as foolish-fond as mine !



## II.

Man's love,—I sighed,—is such a strain  
Of capturing power,—  
The nest in which the dove hath lain  
One throbbing hour:  
Woman's . . . the soul that listeneth,  
With overborne, enchanted breath,—  
The hope that never perisheth,—  
The life that does not die with death.

## ALONE.

A LITTLE child whose rhythms of laughter smoothed  
All household dissonance away,—whose step  
Kept time to the light measure of her heart,—  
Whose frolic-nature claimed all kindredship  
With jestful, jubilant things, lay piteously  
Moaning, held in the grasp of mortal pain.

The sportive look died out within her eyes,  
The quip upon her tongue, the mirthfulness  
From the young voice, as the sunshiny path,  
Where danced with her the fairy-footed hours,  
Darkened beneath the sudden shadow that came  
Stalking between her and life's new-risen sun.

She raised a troubled glance: "What is it, father?"  
And he made answer; "Only a messenger  
Whom the dear Lord hath sent to call you, Sweet,  
Away from all things sad, to a fair land  
Where it is always beautiful summer-time."  
Startled,—about the stooping neck she clung

With passionate burst of childlike uncontrol:  
“Go with me, father, for I am afraid;  
I shiver at the creeping of the dark;  
I tremble! Let me hold your dear, warm hand;  
O father . . . not alone! Why even here  
About this pretty world I have not ventured  
To walk untended—”

“Little trembler, no,—  
You shall not go untended. Christ himself  
Has travelled the pathway through, and made it bright;  
And now He leaves the seraph-songs a little,  
To come and hold my tender baby’s hand:  
And just outside the dusk,—(some call it, death)—  
He waits to bear you past the shady places,  
Up to your mother, darling, where she leans  
And watches for you at the gates of pearl  
We’ve talked about right often: With Him so close,  
You will not be afraid?”

The searching eyes  
Closed as if weighted by too heavy a thought;  
And in a silence, solemn and strange to see,  
She lay as grappling with a truth that mastered  
Her little powers. But when again she turned  
Upon her father her full eyes, the fear  
Had vanished, and the radiant look of joy  
Came back to brighten her face, just as of old;

And from her mouth ashened to deathliness,  
Faltered consent articulate, which to him  
Whose ear caught at its broken meaning, seemed  
The first, faint trial-note of that glad song  
Which the sweet baby-voice should sing for ever.

## SAINT CECILIA.

### I.

HAVEN'T you seen her?—and don't you know  
Why I dote on the darling so?  
Let me picture her as she stands  
There with the music-book in her hands,  
Looking as ravishing, rapt and bright  
As a baby Saint Cecilia might,  
Lisping her bird-notes,—that's Belle White.

### II.

Watch as she raises her eyes to you,  
Half-crusht violets dipt in dew,  
Brimming with timorous, coy surprise,—  
(Doves have just such glistening eyes:)  
But, let a dozen of years have flight,  
Will there be *then* such harmless light  
Warming these luminous eyes,—Belle White?

### III.

Look at the pretty, feminine grace  
Even now, on the small, young face:

Such a consciousness as she speaks,  
Flushing the ivory of her cheeks,—  
Such a maidenly, arch delight  
That she carries me captive quite,  
Snared with her daisy-chain,—Belle White.

## IV.

Many an ambusht smile lies hid  
Under that innocent, downcast lid:  
Arrows will fly, with silvery tips,  
Out from the bow of those arching lips  
Parting so guilelessly, as she stands  
There with the music-book in her hands,  
Chanting her bird-notes soft and light,  
Even as Saint Cecilia might,  
Dove with the folded wings,—Belle White!

## THE APOSTLE OF TRUTH,

WHO DENIED HIS MASTER.

(*"E pur si muove."*)

WHY bade he not blind Error bring  
Its hate to light the pyre,  
While he stood wrapped with grand disdain,  
In martyr-robcs of fire?  
*He* knew no links could bind the soul  
Whose venturous courage trod,  
Unpiloted through pathless voids,  
The infinite of God!

From its far, eyried crest of power  
The eagle-spirit swooped;  
Yet at the mumbling beck of Eld,  
With weak compliance stooped;  
While Superstition wrought and strove  
To rivet fast the chain,  
Lest that too dauntless wing should mount  
The dangerous heights again.

“The Holy-Office cells are grim,”—  
Succumbing flesh could say;  
Though spirit whispered,—“There’s a light  
Diviner than the day.”  
—“But when resistless hands oppose,  
And myriad tongues deny,  
What can I else?”—“The grandest thing . . .  
For Truth’s sake,—dare to die!”

Strange!—that the ray which filled his soul  
With utmost floods of light,  
Should even one cowering moment lose  
Its radiance to his sight:  
Strange!—that the eye whose ken could pierce  
To worlds on worlds afar,  
Should let a dastard film of fear  
Hide truth’s resplendent star.



## THE OPEN GATE.

PAST and over;—Yet no frenzy  
Racks my overladen brain;  
Grief can anodyne the spirit,  
Woe can numb its pain.

Did you deem the blow would crush me,  
Pitying comforters,—that I  
In despairing acquiescence  
Could but moan and die?

Nay,—one deadening shock hath palsied  
So my sentient nature o'er,  
Well I knew no after sorrow  
Now could craze me more.

Yet I grasped without abatement  
Its full meaning when ye said  
Softly, lest the sound should stun me,  
That the child was dead.

Keep that bitterer word,—it gauges  
Something of that *other* woe,  
Different as the soundless ocean's  
From the shallows' flow.

O, not dead:—*that* word has in it  
Maddening terrors, wild alarms:  
—Rather, God has given the darling  
To his father's arms!

Months,—or is it years?—have vanisht  
Since for *him* the boy has smiled,  
And if saints can long in heaven,  
He must want the child.

. . . I have seen the gates unfolding,  
(Heavenly hath the vision been,)  
—Seen the little stranger venture  
Through the radiance in:

Watched the timid, shrinking wonder  
On the baby-face so fair,  
And the kindling smile of rapture,  
When he found *him* there:

Watched the soul-full recognition;  
Saw the finger pointing back

To the arms he knew were stretching  
Toward that shining track:

Till I wondered at my sorrow,—  
But the vision would not stay;  
And it left the truth unsoftened,  
—He is taken away.

—What is left me? Only patience,  
Only heart to watch and wait,  
Till that moment when as convoys  
From the open gate,

Forth shall issue child and father,  
Bend above me,—name my name,—  
Sent upon a tenderer errand  
Than they ever came:

If to nurse the thought can lighten  
Even now the crush of woe,  
Surely, surely 'twill be blissful  
To arise and go!

## THE RESTING-PLACE.

As palmers wont to hail the nichéd seat  
At desert-well, where they put off the shoon  
And robe of travel,—so I, a pilgrim as they,  
Tired with my six-days' track, would turn aside  
Out of the scorch and glare into the shade  
Of Sunday-stillness. Resting, I would listen  
Gladdened, to the gurgle of the hidden stream,  
Till every fevered throb grew calm through peace.  
So sitting, that perfectest repose should steal  
Inward, which disillusionizes sense,  
And leaves the spirit, unhindered of the flesh,  
Free to forget itself in dreams of heaven.

I would inhale the bracing, zested air  
That vivifies the soul and lifts it up  
To saintly heights: and to my lips that crave  
Refreshment cooler than lies ever 'staled

In cisterns choked by weedy worldliness,  
I'd carry in my scallop of faith, the water  
That gushes from the Smitten Rock.

And thus

Strengthened, I would take up my staff again,  
And with reanimate and quickened step,  
Sing *Benedicite*, and go my way.

## THE RAIN-DROP'S FATE.

Its home was the breast of a luminous rack  
Whose fringes of purple and dun  
Were frayed by a gust on its turbulent track,  
And tangled by shafts from the sun.

Slow drifted the cloud in the wane of the light,  
Till it hung o'er a garden so fair,  
That the rain-drop grew envious-sad at the sight,  
And peevishly sighed to be there.

A lover-like breeze that came out of the south,  
Snatched up from its fretful repose  
The murmurer, and laid it,—first kissing its mouth,—  
In the innermost heart of a rose.

The chamber with crimson-wrought tapestry hung,  
The floor sanded over with gold,

The fragrance spilt out of the censers that swung  
Around, were a joy to behold.

The saffron-dyed rift in the distance afar,  
Seemed only a blot on the night,  
And the jubilant rain-drop looked out on a star  
In a trance of exulting delight.

'Twas the bliss of a moment: A tender-browed girl  
Slow threading through pathway and bower,  
Bade the eye she drew after her, look at the pearl  
That swam in the heart of the flower.

“Not the Queen of the East had so perfect a draught,  
Nor a chalice so jewel'd to sip,”—  
He said, as he gave her the rose-cup:—she quaffed,  
And the pearl was dissolved on her lip.

## ROSALIE.

### I.

THE bickering fire-light dances  
About the fragrant room,  
And the windows' crimson drapery  
Shuts out the twilight-gloom:  
And the swell and fall of music  
Make preludes to the mirth  
Of storied voice and happy heart  
Around the blazing hearth:  
—But Rosalie  
Heeds not the ballad, nor the burst  
Of childish glee.

### II.

The wintry wind is shrieking  
Like some wild thing in wrath,  
And snaps the hoary beechen-boughs,  
And stamps them in its path.



And as with stridulous bellow  
The surge of sleety rain  
Comes booming with tornado-strength  
Against the window-pane,—  
Sad Rosalie  
Shades off the light, and sends her thoughts  
Far out to sea.

## III.

And while her troubled forehead  
Against the pane is prest,  
A dizzy rush of eddyng fears  
Goes swirling through her breast.  
—She sees a struggling vessel  
Poised on a mountain wave;  
She looks again. . . . 'Tis fathoms plunged  
Within a billowy grave!  
With wandering aim her fingers  
Close, with a pallid start,  
Upon a hidden tress that feels  
The quickening of her heart:  
For Rosalie  
Shivers to think what sunny heads  
Go down at sea.

## IV.

Amidst the merry pauses,  
The blast is louder heard;

And a child whose sudden sympathy  
By danger's sense is stirred,—  
Whispers with blue eyes glazing,  
And roses blanched to white,  
“O Sister!—*think how many ships*  
*The storm will wreck to-night!*”  
—The anguish only needed  
That touch of pity more  
To crown its torture:—the light form  
Slides fainting to the floor.  
Ah, Rosalie!  
—*That* night the twin-locks floated deep  
Beneath the sea!

## THE AMULET.

### I.

THE braided circlet clasps her arm,  
And midst the jewels rare,  
The light is trembling with the charm  
That holds it captive there.

Tranced with the flashing ruby-gleams,  
Cloud-pillowed it will lie,  
And utter forth in tell-tale dreams  
Its secret to the sky.

### II.

But purer links than these, inwove  
With yet a subtler art,  
Set with that burning, brilliant, love,  
Are wound about her heart.

Thought lingers, kindling at the glance,  
And though it owns no thrall,  
There gathers o'er her eye's expanse  
A haze that tells him all.

## THE IDLE LYRE.

THERE was an idle lyre  
Amid Heaven's choral band;  
A messenger was summoned  
To hear his Lord's command,  
That from earth's lowly children  
Some favored one he bring,  
Who had a skillful finger  
To sweep the golden string.

O high—O, wondrous honour!  
Whose shall the glory be  
To break that lyre's strange silence  
With heaven-born harmony?  
What mighty laurel'd minstrel,  
First of the fame-wreath'd throng,  
Shall angels reckon worthy  
To swell those waves of song?

Some calm and saintly spirit?  
Some affluent soul whose praise

Hath caught the sacred key-note  
That seraph voices raise?  
Some pure unearthly nature,—  
Some listening heart that hears,  
In golden-centred silence,  
The music of the spheres?

—A little child was playing  
Beside his mother's knee,  
Clad in the simple meekness  
Of infant purity:  
The angel smiling, beckoned,  
And breathed the soft behest:  
The lowliest one could waken  
That silent lyre the best.

## POWERS' PROSERPINE.

THAT half-averted face,—It takes my breath !  
The smile that drifts around the dimpled mouth,  
Tears eddying in it ; the low, broadened brow,  
Calm through its passionless divinity,  
The cheek whose velvet softness seems to dint,  
As a thought touches it ; the floss of hair,  
A Juno-circlet round the imperial head ;  
The chastened charm of maiden modesty  
Pleading in every curve, and welling up  
In tided heavings of the cloven breasts :  
—What marvel that the cluster'd loveliness  
Should tempt a kingly spirit from his throne !

Ascend, successful Master, farther still  
The path that upward leads : Take thou the torch  
—Than Ceres' brighter,—which thy genius lights  
At its own Etna-fire, to guide thee on,  
And in thy beauty-quest, search o'er the world.  
Outstrip the Grecian in his marvellous craft ;

Shake in the grasp of Angelo the palm;  
Receive the chisel from Canova's hand,  
And catch Thorwaldsen's mantle as it falls;  
Then humbled turn away from earth's poor Art,  
Confessing that its grandest skill is only  
The dust of the balance weighed against *His* power  
Who fashioned with a word a perfect man,  
And breathed into the clay a living soul!

## LIFE-CLOSE.

### I.

THE calm, full day, so flusht with light,  
So arched with azur'd majesty,  
Has sunk beneath the mystic sea  
That shuts the immortal from our sight.

### II.

And as we watched its westering rays  
Go down behind the purple rim,  
We dared not let a tear-drop dim  
That rich horizon's lustrous blaze.

### III.

What kingly promise spanned its morn;—  
What noble ends its noon-time hours!  
How grandly its unresting powers  
Have all the heat and burden borne!



## IV.

'Tis well the longed-for night should come  
With curtain-drop of kind release ;  
So, in our souls we whispered—"Peace,"  
As the last shadows settled home.

## V.

But while we miss the shining bars  
That compassed round this day so bright,  
We look aloft,—and lo, the night  
Darkening above us, throbs with stars !

## THE BY-GONE.

(A SOUTHERN CHRISTMAS CAROL.)

### I.

THE dear Twenty-Fifth of December,  
The festival fullest of joy,  
Most precious for age to remember,  
Most merry for maiden and boy,—  
Comes again with its promise to gladden,  
Comes again with its prodigal cheer,  
To banish whatever may sadden  
The lingering days of the year.

### II.

We know that this beautiful season  
Is flung like a garland of mirth  
(We thank the dear Lord for the reason !)  
All over the face of the earth :

The homeliest cottage seems brighter,  
The wintriest spirit less sad;  
The greyest of landscapes grows lighter,  
And the world's wrinkled forehead is glad.

## III.

'Tis the time of all times to remember  
The past, and be happy:—and yet  
The shadow that glooms *our* December  
Is,—to feel that we cannot forget!  
We heap the red fagots together,—  
We wrap us with carefulest art;  
But the cold's not the cold of the weather,  
The rime is the rime of the heart.

## IV.

All the length of our desolate border  
The hopeless make moan,—and alas,  
In the conflict of order with order,  
The peoples are withered like grass.  
No light-hearted, loud jubilation  
Makes the holiday hearty with glee:  
A hush broods abroad the plantation,  
Like the storm's dying sob on the sea!

## V.

There once was a time,—let us cherish  
Its memory deep in the core

Of emotions we dare not let perish,—  
A time we can look for no more !  
Let us tell to our children the story,  
With earnest and tremulous mouth,  
Of the sweetness, the grace and the glory  
That hallowed the Homes of the South.

## VI.

Let us picture the Christmas-tide blisses,  
The holly-crown'd hall,—the brave cheer,—  
The warm, courtly welcome,—the kisses  
Of the kindred unmet for a year :—  
The throngs of old servants who gather  
To witness the dance and the glee ;  
*This* dandled our mother,—our father  
*That* patriarch nursed on his knee.

## VII.

The eyes of our children will glisten  
Half tearful, half doubtful, perchance ;  
And they'll think that it sounds, as they listen,  
Like the page of a feudal romance.  
And thus, from our loving lips learning  
The By-gone so tenderly o'er,  
They will sigh with regretfullest yearning  
For the beautiful Christmas of yore.

## IN PACE.

### I.

MOTHER, drooping wan and weary  
In the midnight silence dreary,  
Conning o'er the childish prattle  
Of the boy who fell in battle,  
Till your memories sting you,—sighing,  
—“Who will tell me where he's lying?”

Dry your tears now: kindly faces  
Bend above the hallowed places,—  
Seek the nameless dead, and bear them  
Home to tombs their hands prepare them;  
—Friend, compatriot, comrade, brother,  
And your boy's among them, mother.

### II.

Widowed wife, whose heart is breaking  
Slowly, surely with its aching,

Moaning on your tear-stained pillow,  
—“Were his grave beneath the willow  
In the church-yard,—kneeling by it,  
I could sob myself to quiet:”

Henceforth calm your heartache: tender  
Patriot love doth solace render;  
Plants the cypress,—rears the column,  
And with saintly rites and solemn  
Lays your darling there: Pale weeper,  
Go and pray beside your sleeper.

## III.

Maiden, with white lids dropt slowly  
Over eyes downcast and holy,  
Hiding grief that none discover  
For the far-off-buried lover,—  
Wailing of that spot so lonely,  
—“O, to kiss and clasp it only!”

Be your voiceless sorrow softened;  
Think of him no more uncoffined:  
Not a tended turf is greener,  
Not a cedarn copse serener,  
Not a mossier mound than this is;  
Maiden, warm it with your kisses!

# SONNETS.





## EQUIPOISE.

JUST when we think we've fixed the golden mean,—  
The diamond point, on which to balance fair  
Life and life's lofty issues,—weighing there,  
With fractional precision, close and keen,  
Thought, motive, word and deed,—there comes between  
Some wayward circumstance, some jostling care,  
Some temper's fret, some mood's unwise despair,  
To mar the equilibrium, unforeseen,  
And spoil our nice adjustment!—Happy he,  
Whose soul's calm equipoise can know no jar,  
Because the unwavering hand that holds the scales,  
Is the same hand that weighed each steadfast star,—  
Is the same hand that on the sacred tree  
Bore, for his sake, the anguish of the nails!

## SATURDAY NIGHT.

THE spirit's trailing garments that have swept  
Through all the week along the dusty way,  
Catching assoilment from the griming day,  
(Though oft aside the foot in voidance stept,—)  
Gather them up to-night: they have not kept  
Immaculate their whiteness from the clay;  
The delicate weftage, fretting troubles fray;  
The broider'd hem, oft caught by cares that crept  
Brier-like, along the path,—is rent apart,  
Ravelled and distained. Wherefore, disheartened one,  
Loosen these work-day vestments from thee, lest,  
Uncleansed by meditation's holy art,  
Thy soul be found unfitted to put on  
The pure, fair linen of the Sabbath rest.

## CONVIVA SATUR.

If *he* could say it, turning from the board  
His creedless life had spread him, nor repine  
That in his dear Digentia, other wine  
Than his, should gather coolness, or the hoard  
Of Sabine olives be for others stored,—  
Then surely, I! The love this heart of mine  
Knew of all draughts to be the most divine,  
Into life's crystal goblet hath been poured  
Till it runs over: faith, the living bread,  
Hallows the table, while on every side,  
With heaping clusters have my hopes been fed,  
Nor tempered appetite been once denied:  
And I am ready, when the thanks are said,  
To rise and leave the banquet,—satisfied.

## THE MORROW.

OF all the tender guards which Jesus drew  
About our frail humanity, to stay  
The pressure and the jostle that alway  
Are ready to disturb, whate'er we do,  
And mar the work our hands would carry through,—  
None, more than this, environs us each day  
With kindly wardenship:—"Therefore, I say,  
Take *no* thought for the morrow." Yet we pay  
The wisdom scanty heed, and impotent  
To bear the burden of the imperious Now,  
Assume the future's exigence unsent.

God grants no overplus of power: 'Tis shed  
Like morning manna: Yet we dare to bow  
And ask,—“Give us to-day our *morrow's* bread!”

## DOUBT.

I LIFT weak hands in lowliest thankfulness,  
That, as a little stumbling child who knows  
Naught of the way he treads, but onward goes,  
Happy, secure, unquestioning, reasonless,  
Because he feels his father's fingers press  
His own in steadfast guidance,—doubts impose  
No cross-lights to confuse me or distress.  
“Is this the way?” If Christ but answer,—“Yes,”—  
I am content. I would not have the trust  
Of yearling prattlers shame me, while I stand  
Demanding *how* the bridgeless gulf is crossed,—  
The scaleless mountain levelled with the dust,—  
The mist-swathe rent in which the path seems lost;  
What need to ask?—*My Father holds my hand.*

## OURS.

Most perfect attribute of love, that knows  
No separate self,—no conscious *mine* nor *thine*;  
But mystic union, closer, more divine  
Than wedded soul and body can disclose.  
No flush of pleasure on thy forehead glows,  
No mist of feeling in thine eyes can shine  
No faintest pain surprise thee, but there goes  
The lightning-spark along love's viewless line,  
Bearing with instant message to my heart,  
Responsive recognition. Suns or showers  
May come between us; silences may part;  
The rushing world know not, nor care to know;—  
Yet back and forth the flashing secrets go,  
Whose sacred, only sesamé is,—*ours*!

## THE HYSSOP.

BEAR me no lordly palm-branch, such as waves  
Triumphantly in conquering hands, nor choose  
The crown of bay, pearled with Olympian dew,  
Nor fadeless laurel, such as poet craves :  
Twine me no myrtle which the lover laves  
With passion's tears ; wreathe not the mournful yew's  
Funereal bough, nor marvel I refuse  
The willow drooping low o'er hallow'd graves,  
Nor bind me yet the peaceful olive's leaves.  
But grant me dearer, holier far than all  
Emblems of earthly good or earthly loss,  
That sign of heavenliest boon the soul receives,—  
The lowly-springing hyssop of the wall,  
Wet with the blood that flows from Calvary's cross !

## NATURE'S LESSON.

PAIN is no longer pain when it is past ;  
And what is all the mirth of yesterday,  
More than the yester flush that paled away,  
Leaving no trace across the landscape cast  
Whereby to prove its presence there? The blast  
That bowed the knotted oak beneath its sway,  
And rent the lissome ash, the forest may  
Take heed of longer, since strewn leaves outlast  
Strewn sunbeams even. Be thou like Nature then,  
Calmly receptive of all sweet delights,  
The while they soothe and strengthen thee : and when  
The wrench of trial comes with swirl and strain,  
Think of the still progressive days and nights,  
That blot with equal sweep, both joy and pain.



## THE STIRRED NEST.

Too much on earth,—too much on what must sway  
With every oversweeping gust of time,  
I've set my hopes, where no rude care might climb,  
Fond thought!—to spoil my nest or steal away  
The cherished singers that for many a day  
Had cheered me with their song. But the rough wind  
Again and yet again has wrenched the bough,  
And driven my clinging fledglings far and wide,  
To wail the refuge which they fail to find,  
And fill my ear with plaintive moaning now.  
Where shall the scattered, homeless wanderers hide  
And build once more? Not here, where storms are  
rife,—  
Not here, my heart!—but where no ills betide,  
In the safe shelter of the Tree of Life!

## THE REASON.

WHEN Death, that irremediable ill,  
Soothed only by submission's bitter balm,  
Wrests from our souls remorselessly, their calm,  
Sweet, natural joys,—we deem no peace can fill,  
Nor zest can stimulate, nor hope have skill  
To solace them more. We say, the soothing psalm  
Will henceforth ever seem a dirge:—"I am  
The Resurrection and the Life,"—be still  
Muffled by falling clods, whereon our tears  
So idly rain. When bowed the ancient sage  
Above his dead, surprised with anguish deep,  
"It cannot help thee,"—urged the friends whose fears  
Stirred for the grief they could not else assuage;  
"*Because* it cannot help,"—he said,—"*I weep.*"

## UNDERTOW.

It is a boon for which to render praise

Beyond our wont, that Heaven the power imparts  
To hide away our festering griefs and smarts,  
And shut us safe from all intrusive gaze.

For oft-times when the impassive brow is still,  
And the hoarse murmurs of the world sink low,  
The inward ear is deafened by the flow

Of whirling maelstroms whose strong eddies fill  
The soul with tempest-wrack: And then to wear  
To eyes wherein no soft responses dwell,

A face of tidal quiet that shall bear  
No ripple of undercurrents, is surely well.

Who would that even the lovingest heart should know  
The secret springs of many an hour of woe?

## IF.

—*hic tandem felicitis*—

AND did the dumb and ghastly solitude,  
The pale, perpetual quiet of the grave,  
Wherein retributive passions cease to rave,  
Hush that tumultuous spirit's rankling mood,  
Till all its stormy riot was subdued,  
And the salt wretchedness it sought to brave,  
Ebbbed into silence, a spent, wintry wave?  
Yea,—if so be the calm did but include  
Final redemption from the woeful strife  
In which he vanquisht sank;—if mercy's kiss  
Of reconcilment sealed his lips before  
The bitter culmination of his life, -  
*Then* found he, through that open grave, a door  
That at the last, hath let him into bliss.

## GOD'S PATIENCE.

OF all the attributes whose starry rays  
Converge and centre in one focal light  
Of luminous glory such as angels' sight  
Can only look on with a blench'd amaze,  
None crowns the brow of God with purer blaze,  
Nor lifts His grandeur to more infinite height,  
Than His exhaustless patience. Let us praise  
With wondering hearts, this strangest, tenderest grace,  
Remembering awe-struck, that the avenging rod  
Of justice must have fallen, and mercy's plan  
Been frustrate, had not Patience stood between,  
Divinely meek: And let us learn that man,  
Toiling, enduring, pleading,—calm, serene,  
For those who scorn and slight, is likest God.

## THE SHADOW.

It comes betwixt me and the amethyst  
Of yon far mountain's billowy range;—the sky,  
Mild with sunseting calmness, to my eye  
Is curtained ever by its haunting mist:  
And oftentimes when some dear brow I've kissed,  
My lips grow tremulous as it sweeps me by,  
With stress of overmastering agony  
That faith and reason all in vain resist.  
It blurs my fairest books; it dims the page  
Of the divinest lore; and on my tongue  
The broken prayer that inward strength would crave,  
Dissolves in sobs no soothing can assuage:  
And this penumbral gloom,—this heart-cloud flung  
Around me is, the memory of a grave.

## FAILURE.

NEVER on any of God's creatures shone

A cheerier sunshine than on us to-day !

Nature's most priceless gifts,—her rich array,  
Soft air, pure sky, green earth and mountain zone,  
Are in fee-simple, each and all our own,

As freely as yonder oriole's on the spray

Of out-bloom'd lilac there, who trills away

His heart in rapture, though his spring be flown.

Our quick blood tingles zestfully ; the fair,

Persistent augury of hope is heard ;

The burden'd spirit uplifts with lithe rebound ;

All life without, within defies despair ;

Yet "*Failure,—Failure,*"—still is sighed around :

—Go to !—we will not listen to the word !

## NON DOLET.

WHEN downfall and disaster sore beset  
The Roman Arria,—yielding to the tide  
Of ills that overwhelmed on every side,  
With unheroic heart that could forget  
'Twas cowardice to die,—she dared and met  
The easier fate, and luring, sought to hide  
For her belovéd's sake (true woman yet!)  
The inward anguish with a wifely pride.  
Not so our Southern Arria:—In the face  
Of deadlier woes, she dared to live, and wring  
Hope out of havoc: till the brave control,  
Pathetic courage and most tender grace  
Of her "*non dolet*," nerved her husband's soul,  
Won him to life, and dulled even failure's sting.



RELIGIOUS PIECES.



## RABBONI.

### I.

OF all the nights of most mysterious dread,  
This elded earth hath known, none matched in  
gloom  
That crucifixion night when Christ lay dead,  
—Sealed up in Joseph's tomb!

### II.

No faith that rose sublime above the pain,  
Remembered in its anguish what He said;  
“After three days, and I shall rise again,”—  
Their hopeless hearts were dead.

### III.

Throughout that ghastly “Preparation-Day,”  
How had the stricken mother dragged her breath!  
—Like all of Adam born, her God-given lay  
Beneath the doom of death.

## IV.

The prophecy she nursed through pondering years  
Of apprehension, now had found its whole  
Fulfillment, infinite beyond her fears,  
—The sword *had* pierced her soul !

## V.

The vehement tears of Peter well might flow,  
Mixed with the wormwood of repentant shame ;  
Now would he yield his life thrice told, if so  
He might confess the name

## VI.

He had denied with curses. Fruitless were  
The keen remorse now, the gnawing smart ;  
A heavier stone than sealed the sepulchre  
Was rolled above his heart.

## VII.

Surprise and grief and baffled hopes sufficed  
To rush as seas their souls and God between ;  
Yet none of all had mourned the buried Christ,  
As Mary Magdalene.

## VIII.

When all condemned,—He bade her live again,  
When all were hard,—His pity poured above

Her penitent spirit, healed it, cleansed its stain,  
And made it pure with love.

## IX.

And she had broken all her costliest store  
O'er Him whose tenderness, so new, so rare,  
Stood like a strong, white angel evermore  
'Twixt her and mad despair.

## X.

And He was dead!—Her peace had died with Him!  
The dæmons who had fled at His control,  
With seven-fold chains within their dungeons dim,  
Would henceforth bind her soul.

## XI.

—How slowly crept the Sabbath's endless week!  
What aching vigils watched the lingering day,  
When she might stagger through the dark and seek  
The garden where He lay!

## XII.

And when she thrid her way to meet the dawn,  
And found the gates unbarred,—a grieving moan  
Brake from her lips—"Who,"—for her strength was  
gone,—  
"Will roll away the stone?"

## XIII.

She held no other thought, no hope but this ;  
To look,—to touch the sacred flesh once more,—  
Handle the spices with adoring kiss,  
And help to wind Him o'er

## XIV.

With the fair linen Joseph had prepared,—  
Lift reverently the wounded hands and feet,  
And gaze, awe-blinded, on the features bared,  
And drink the last, most sweet,

## XV.

Divine illusion of His presence there ;  
And then, the embalming done, with one low cry  
Of utmost, unappeasable despair,  
Seek out her home, and die.

## XVI.

Lo ! the black square that showed the opened tomb !  
She sprang,—she entered unafraid,—and swept  
Her arms outstretching, groping through the gloom,  
To touch Him where He slept.

## XVII.

Her trembling fingers grasped the raiment cold,  
Pungent with aloes, lying where He lay :

She smoothed her hands above it, fold by fold,  
—Her Lord was stolen away!—

## XVIII.

And others came anon, who wept Him sore,  
—Simon and John, the women pale and spent  
With fearful watchings; wondering more and more,  
They questioned, gazed,—and went.

## XIX.

Not thus did Mary. Though the lingering gloom  
Pearled into brightness, and the city's stir  
Came floating upward to the garden tomb,  
There was no dawn for her:

## XX.

No room for faintest hopes, nor utmost fears;  
For when she sobbing stooped and saw the twain  
White-clothen angels, through her falling tears,  
Sit where her Lord had lain,—

## XXI.

And ask,—“Why weepest thou?”—there brake no cry,  
But she with deaden'd calm her answer made:  
“Because they have taken away my Lord, and I  
Know not where He is laid.”

## XXII.

—Was it a step upon the dewy grass?  
Was it a garment rustled by the wind?  
Did some husht breathing o'er her senses pass,  
And draw her looks behind?

## XXIII.

She turned and saw—the very Lord she sought,—  
Jesus, the newly-risen! . . . but no surprise  
Held her astound and rooted to the spot;  
Her film'd and holden eyes

## XXIV.

Had only vision for the swathéd form;  
Nor from her mantle lifted she her face,  
Nor marvelled that the gardener's voice should warm  
With pity at her case;—

## XXV.

Till sprang the sudden thought, “If *he* should know:—”  
And then she turned full quickly: “Sir, I pray,  
Tell me where thou hast borne Him, that I may go  
And take Him thence away.”

## XXVI.

The resurrection-morning's broadening blaze  
Shot up behind, and clear before her sight,



Centered on Jesus its transfiguring rays,  
And haloed Him with light.

## XXVII.

“*Mary !*”—The measureless pathos was the same  
As when her Lord had said—“Thou art forgiven :”  
Had He, for comfort, named her by her name  
Out from the height of heaven ?

## XXVIII.

She looked aloft,—she listened, turned and gazed ;  
A revelation flashed across her brow ;  
One moment,—and she prostrate fell, amazed,—  
“*Rabboni !—It is Thou !*”

## THE CHILD JESUS.

### I.

ALL placid and lonely the village  
Of Nazareth slept on the plain ;  
No husbandman toiled at the tillage,  
Nor reaped the ripe ears of the grain :  
No vine-dressers wrought at their labors,  
Nor passed with their pruning-hooks by :  
The slopes were as silent as Tabor's,  
And Tabor was still as the sky.

### II.

No voices of innocent riot  
In market-place, hostel or hut :  
The hum of the craftsman was quiet,  
The door of the synagogue shut.  
No *Alephs* and *Beths* were heard swelling  
From the school of the scribe, by the wall ;  
And Joseph-the-carpenter's dwelling  
Was hushed as the publican's stall.

## III.

'Twas the week of the Passover: only  
The agéd, the sickly, the blind,  
The tottering children and lonely  
Young mothers, had tarried behind.  
To the sacredest Feast of the nation,  
Through the paths that their fathers had trod,  
All others with paschal oblation  
Had gone to the City of God.

## IV.

And Mary,—to every beholder,  
Her face toucht with wistfulest dole,  
(Remembering what Simeon had told her  
Of the sword that should pierce through her soul,—)  
With faith yet too steadfast to falter,  
Though sorely with mysteries tried,  
Midst the worshippers stood at the altar,  
With Jesus the child by her side.

## V.

The seven days' festival ended,—  
Rites finished for people and priest,  
The throngs from the Temple descended,  
And homeward set face from the Feast.  
And neighbor held converse with neighbor,  
Unwonted and simple and free,

As northward they journeyed toward Tabor,  
Or westward they turned to the sea.

## VI.

But not till the night-dews were falling,  
Did Mary, oft questioning, find,  
As children to children were calling,  
That Jesus had lingered behind.  
*He* vex her?—the mother that bore Him?  
—Or veiled it some portent or sign?  
For oft had she trembled before Him,—  
Her human too near His divine.

## VII.

She sought midst her kinsfolk, whose pity  
Grew tender to look on her grief:  
Then back through the streets of the city  
She hastened, yet found not relief.  
Thus searching, a marvellous story  
Her ear and her senses beguiled;  
—“The Rabbis, grey-bearded and hoary,  
In the Temple are taught by a child.”

## VIII.

O, marvel of womanly weakness!  
She finds Him:—fears, sorrows subside,  
And Mary, the angel of meekness,  
In petulance pauses to chide:

—“Son, wherefore thus tarry to gather  
About Thee the curious throng,  
Unheeding the while, that Thy father  
And I have been seeking Thee long?”

## IX.

A look so reproachfully tender,  
It awed while it melted her eye,  
He cast, as He hastened to render  
Subjection and filial reply :  
—“Nay,—wherefore perplexed and pursuing?  
Dost *thou* too, my mother, forget,  
And wist not the Son must be doing  
The work that His Father hath set?”

## SUPPER AT BETHANY.

AND now the even-tide had come, and Jesus' blesséd  
feet

Ached with the long day's ceaseless toil within the  
scorching street.

The Temple's topmost pinnacle held fast a sunbeam  
yet,

While grey the shadows hung around the groves of  
Olivet.

“Master, the hour wears late ; behold, the sun hath  
left the west,

The thronging crowds have prest Thee sore, and Thou  
hast need of rest.

“The Twelve return from court and lane, and all their  
teachings cease ;

Beseech Thee, leave these noisy ways, and go apart  
for peace.”

With urgency thus Peter spake as the hot streets grew  
dim ;

And Jesus knew each word was said through anxious  
care for Him.

So out beyond the gates they went,—the Master  
walked before,

And stars shone through the olives ere they paused  
at Martha's door.

Instant her earnest zeal was fired ; with tumult of  
accord

Her toucht heart sprang with haste to yield due honor  
to her Lord.

And through the quiet-order'd house is strange, un-  
wonted stir ;

—The Master, spent and travail-worn, hath deigned  
to come to her.

So tired He seems, that to and fro she flies with  
quick command ;

And as she speeds the hurrying meal, she misses  
Mary's hand.

“What !—following Him with questionings still,—there,  
sitting at His feet,

When tasked with teachings, He is faint for lack of  
food to eat?

“Lord, for Thy needful earthly meat hast Thou so little care?

Nay, bid my sister come and help, that we for Thee prepare.”

Amid His parables He paused to hearken while she spake,

And Mary's startled, down-dropt face a lowlier look did take.

And Jesus said, while tender love ran infinite through each word,

(He knew that fretted heart for *Him* with fervid zeal was stirred :)

“Ah, Martha, Martha, many things thy daily comfort vex,

And troubles manifold distract, and cumbering cares perplex :

“But one thing only needful is, and verily I say, Mary hath chosen that better part which none shall take away.”



## EVEN SO, FATHER.

WHEN from the central throne on which the eyes  
Of seraphim could only avail to look  
With half-uplifted lids and clouding wings  
Raised shieldingly betwixt them and God's face,—  
The Christ descended,—wonder throbbed through  
heaven.

Unblenched their strong, far-piercing sight could bear  
The near, full gaze upon the countless suns  
That met them in their circling sweep through space,  
But from *His* glory, they shrank dazzled, blind.  
Then how should man, poor atom of a day,  
Endure the perilous brightness, and yet live?

Not even angelic nature might conceive  
Such abnegation,—such a putting off  
Of Godhead splendors,—such an humbling down  
Of pure Divinity's sovereign attributes,  
That the clay vessel of humanity  
*Could* hold concentrate in its finite sphere

Omniscience that out-flashed the bournless verge  
Of God's grand universe. And when they looked  
To see Him burst with undisputed sway  
Upon that little, distant speck in space  
Where the rebellious dwelt, whose impotence  
Should shrivel awe-struck before Him,—who shall  
recount

Their dumb bewilderment, as back the host  
Came rapid with the tidings,—They had left  
The Son of God, a babe in swaddling-bands!

With questioning gaze intense, they bent to read  
The mystery's meaning. They beheld the child,  
A human sleeper on a human breast,  
With new-found sense of that Omnipotence  
That thus could narrow and shut itself behind  
A mask of flesh: and more the amazement grew  
That she,—a mortal,—dared to press those hands  
With such familiar love, when *they* had hung  
Back from His touch in heaven.

Through all His years  
Of Nazareth toil,—of goings to and fro  
Up to Jerusalem's paschal feasts, they watched,  
Panting to pierce the yet unlifted veil.  
And when the hour of His forth-setting came,  
They but beheld humiliation still.  
Not from the ranks of venerable state,—

Not from the porches of the vaunted schools,—  
Not from the lineage of inspired souls  
Whose prescience far outran the generation  
That knew them not,—not from the lordly race,  
Affluent of wisdom, lofty-doing or power,—  
Saw they Him choose the fitting instruments  
Wherewith to work His vast accomplishments.  
But He did take Him poor, ignoble men,  
(As calendared in earthly registry,)  
And put into their stammering, untaught lips,  
Words that the high-born angels dared not use.

Foul dæmons that had ravined unafraid  
Over this marred creation,—thrusting forth  
Their hissing insolence in the very front  
Of Heaven's pure ministrants, they marvelled to see  
Confounded shrink away, when these weak men  
Gave utterance to their exorcising spell,  
And spake the name of Jesus. They beheld  
Fierce hearts that scouted God and mocked His love,  
Break and grow soft and heave with aspirations  
Saintly as even their own: And a fresh thought  
Of that stupendous power that with such helps,  
Could work such ends, begat in them new joy.

And when they heard the voice of Christ Himself  
Uplifted in that lone Judean vale,  
In audible thanksgiving and praise,—more rapt,

They bent and listened still :

“I thank thee, Father,  
Lord of the heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid  
Thy wisdom from the wise and prudent, and hast  
Revealed it unto babes like these : Even so  
Father,—since thus 'tis good within Thy sight.”

As died the utterance on those sacred lips,  
The listeners caught it up in glad amaze,  
And bore it heavenward, ever murmuring,  
As o'er the Atonement's yet unfolded plan  
They mused in mute astonishment,—“Even so  
Father,—since thus it seemeth good to Thee !”

## THE SEARCH OF THE SAGES.

### I.

ALL night upon their lofty tower,  
With upturned brow and straining eye,  
The Persian Sages watched each hour  
Of the brief, orient dusk go by:  
Yet still that unfamiliar star,  
Mysteriously near, yet far,  
Prevailing with such steadfast blaze  
Above Orion's belted rays,  
Or mellow Pleiades, was there,  
Unheralded, unnamed, unknown:  
No Chaldees' chart its place had shown  
In the broad heavens; and yet how rare  
Its radiance was!—how crystal fair!

### II.

It did not set, like other stars,  
It did not melt away nor wane;

But steadier than the fiery Mars,  
Each night beheld it gleam again  
In unshorn splendor. Was it sent,  
Precursor of some strange event,  
The gods would thus reveal to earth?  
Did it presage some Princely birth,  
Some regnant sway that should extend  
From south to north, from east to west,  
O'er all the Islands of the Blest,  
Far as the sun his beams might send,  
Even to the world's remotest end?

## III.

Thus grew the thought:—"It must be so!  
The star tends westward, as we see;  
The sacred Hierarchs bid us go  
And seek the new-born Sovereignty.  
Nor sent on embassy so grand,  
Dare we depart with empty hand:  
But of our costliest, richest things  
'Tis meet we bear this King of kings,  
Right royal offerings,—Uphaz' gold,  
The myrrh of Saba, spices sweet,  
To lay, for homage at His feet,  
Whose empire vast and manifold,  
Such mighty augury hath foretold."

## IV.

So, forth upon their heaven-sent way,  
The Sages journeyed long and far,  
With eyes updrawn to watch the ray  
That glittered from their pilot star.  
And when meridian suns on high  
Drowned its new sparkle from the sky,  
Trustful, they paused within their tent,  
Until the eclipsing glory went  
Down goldenly beneath the plain ;  
And then with hope half-touched with fear,  
They looked aloft, and fixt and clear,  
Each eve, amid the twilight's wane,  
They hailed their mystic guide again.

## V.

With thirsty eyes its beams they quaffed,  
And followed at its silent call,  
Until it dropt a crystal shaft  
Right over Bethlehem's village wall.  
They marvelled wherefore there should be  
No stir of royal pageantry ;  
They looked to see the palace light,  
They deemed would daze the vulgar sight ;  
Yet strangely urged, they onward passed  
Through careless throngs, and reached at last

A clay-built shed o'er which their guide  
    Stood still. A wide-eyed, dumb amaze  
One instant held them: but the rays  
    Shot straight the litter'd straw beside.  
Then,—mute before the mystery  
    Unfathomable, in meekness they  
Entered with offerings, worship, praise,  
    And owned the Sovereignty that lay  
Swathed in our weak humanity,  
A babe upon a woman's knee.

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## THE YOUNG RULER'S QUESTION.

HE had riches and ease and honor,  
And never a Jewish boy  
Had passed on the banks of Jordan  
A tenderer youth of joy.

He had houses and fields and vineyards,  
And blessings of all degree;  
None had a fairer portion  
In beautiful Galilee.

Whatever this world could offer  
Of pure and innocent bliss,  
Whatever his nature needed  
Of goodliest gifts, was his.

He had felt no weary longings,—  
No wants that were unsupplied;  
Upright and just and noble,  
His spirit was satisfied.

Only one thought had power  
Ever a cloud to cast:  
—Joy, to be wholly perfect,  
Must be a joy *to last*:

And he knew that his own was fleeting;  
For he read in the sacred Psalm,  
That man must fade as a flower,  
And it sometimes marred his calm.

He turned to the holy Prophets,  
Security thence to draw;  
And he listened to Moses' teachings,  
And he strove to keep the Law.

He tithed his anise and cummin,  
He tithed his mint and rue:  
He *knew* he had earth's best treasures,—  
He *hoped* he had heaven's too.

—In the mart of a busy city  
It came to pass, one day,  
That a throng of curious people  
Was choking the narrow way;

All pressing with upturned faces,  
Eager to hear and see

The miracle-working Rabbi  
Who had come to Galilee.

—“Now, verily, what will it profit  
A man, though he gain the whole  
Of the world, with its utmost glory,  
If yet he should lose his soul?

“Come unto me, ye weary—”  
It dropped on the passing ear  
Of the young and happy Ruler,  
For he could not choose but hear.

He did not pause to listen  
As he skirted the crowd, but went  
Homeward athwart the city,  
Wrapped in his sweet content.

Yet ever and oft, the Teacher  
Rose to his inward eye;  
Over and over the question  
Waited his heart's reply.

—Bliss that should be eternal,  
—Pleasures that could not cloy:  
These were the very blessings  
Needed to crown his joy!

Again through the palm-girt highways,  
When noontide's sultry flame  
Was searing the happy vineyards,  
The wonderful Teacher came.

And the Ruler hailed His coming ;  
For harvest or vintage cheer  
Never had silenced the question  
That troubled his restless ear.

Hastening, he sought the Prophet  
Whose words had wrought the strife :  
—"What shall I do, good Master,  
To inherit eternal life?"

As he kneeled so young and guileless,  
Single in aim and art,—  
Jesus, beholding him, loved him,  
Though He read his inmost heart.

And he answered and said, as gently  
As father would say to son :  
—"Thou knowest the Ten Commandments ;"  
And he spake them one by one.

A look that was half reproachful  
The eye of the Saviour met :

—“All these I have kept from childhood ;  
Good Master, what lack I yet?”

And Jesus, beholding him, loved him,  
And a human sympathy stole,  
As He gazed on the earnest pleader,  
Deep into His sacred soul.

All blessings this life could bring him  
Even now were his, He knew ;  
But he coveted both possessions,—  
The earthly and heavenly too.

Never diviner pity  
Melted the mournful eye,  
Never a tearful yearning,  
Than softened the firm reply :

“Only one thing thou lackest ;  
Forego thy heritage here,  
All of thy stored abundance,  
Everything heart holds dear :

“Choose thee between the blessings,  
This, or the life to be :  
Thou shalt have treasure in heaven,  
If thou wilt follow me !”

A sudden, surprised dejection  
Flooded the lifted face,  
Doubting and disappointment  
Darkened the wistful gaze.

Verily, this was a doctrine  
Hard for the flesh and sore ;  
This was a self-denying  
Never conceived before !

Had there been half required,  
Then he might heed the call :  
Dignities, loves, possessions,—  
How could he yield them all ?

Bitter the stern exaction  
Fell on his heart that day ;  
And wavering,—wishing,—choosing,—  
He sorrowfully went away.

—Ye who have read and marvelled  
That Jesus, who loved him so,  
Should let him depart unhindered,—  
Will ye, like the Ruler, go ?

Ponder the solemn question  
Deep in each conscience set,

Asking in soulfelt earnest,  
“Master, what lack I yet?”

Choose ye, as every seeker  
Who findeth Him truly doth,  
—Earthly, or heavenly treasure;  
For ye cannot inherit both.

Ye may be near the kingdom,—  
Nearer than any know;  
And Jesus may love and pity,  
And yet,—*He may let you go!*

## READY.

I WOULD be ready, Lord,  
My house in order set,  
None of the work Thou gavest me  
To do, unfinished yet.

I would be watching, Lord,  
With lamp well-trimmed and clear,  
Quick to throw open wide the door,  
What time Thou drawest near.

I would be waiting, Lord,  
Because I cannot know  
If in the night or morning watch,  
I may be called to go.

I would be working, Lord,  
Each day, each hour for Thee ;  
Assured that thus I wait Thee well,  
Whene'er Thy coming be.



I would be living, Lord,  
As ever in Thine eye ;  
For whoso lives the holiest life,  
Is fittest far to die.

## THE TWO MITES.

“TO-DAY is the day of oblation,  
And the people with one accord  
Are bringing their free-will offerings  
To the treasury of the Lord.

“With tithings and consecrations  
The faithful are hastening thence;  
The rich with their sanctuary shekels,  
The poor with their hard-earn'd pence.

“‘Honor the Lord with thy substance,’—  
(These are the words divine,)  
‘And thy barns shall be filled with plenty,  
Thy presses shall burst with wine.’

“To *me* is the precept spoken?  
—Yea, even to me, who am  
An heir and a child of promise,  
A daughter of Abraham.

“Yet in my need and straitness,  
Hardly bestead to live,  
Desolate, lonely, widowed,  
What have I left to give?

“Yet there is quiet solace  
To feel that *he* cannot know,  
How the dole he left in the coffer  
Failed me so long ago.

“And now I am hoarding in it  
Only two mites, my all;  
—Two mites which make but a farthing,  
And that is a gift so small!

“So small when I count the blessings,  
The marvellous, rich reward  
I have found in His sacred service,—  
So little to bring my Lord!

“Yet naught of *our* gifts He needeth,  
Whose plenitude boundless is:  
The corn, the wine and the olives,  
The flocks and the herds are His.

“So among the golden talents,  
I will hide my mites, and pray

That He who feedeth the sparrows,  
Will keep me in mind to-day.

“He knoweth I blush to offer  
My penury’s straiten’d store;  
But I’ll give myself with my farthing,  
And then He will count it more.”

*She* wist not that Christ was watching,  
As she offered her alms so small;  
She heard not His commendation,  
—“She hath given, yea, more than all.”

For the prayer in which she wrapped it  
Outweighed the treasury’s gold;  
And the mites which made but a farthing,  
Have yielded a million-fold.

## THE SYMPATHY OF JESUS.

### I.

WHO that hath been sore smitten,—who  
That ever sobbed one wordless moan  
On some warm bosom, fond and true,  
Some sorrowing bosom, like our own,  
And felt how much those lips close-prest,  
That hand close-claspt, could hush our fears,—  
Can turn to Jesus' tenderer breast  
Nor know the chasten'd bliss of tears!

### II.

The earthly heart on which we lean  
May have its separate griefs to bear,  
A cross undreamed-of, woes unseen,  
Wounds that we lacerate unaware:  
Its staggering strength may scarce sustain  
The burden of its own distress,  
And still we heap our cumbering pain,  
Unconscious how the weight may press.

## III.

But He whose human feet have trod  
All paths of trial, He who knew  
No sympathy but that of God,  
Though linked with flesh that craved it too,—  
Yearns with us in our needs, our dreads,  
And mindful of our feeble frame,  
Holds to His heart our throbbing heads  
With love that hath no mortal name.

## IV.

We know that on the throne of thrones,  
He wears our lowly nature still;  
We know that through the loftiest tones  
With which adoring seraphs thrill,  
He bends the faintest prayer to hear,  
Though only sighs our anguish tell:  
That sobbing voice falls on His ear  
Sweeter than Gabriel's ever fell!

## V.

Then, desolate spirit,—take the grief  
Thou to no mortal canst disclose,  
And He will give thee sure relief,  
Touched with the feeling of thy woes:

And thou shalt learn how all complete,  
How far above earth's purest bliss,  
How passing more than human-sweet,  
The sympathy of Jesus is!

## THE LITTLE PILGRIMS.

SOILED with the dust of travel,  
Weary with wandering late,  
Two little lagging pilgrims  
Paused at the castle gate.

Sorely their feet had stumbled,  
Often they'd gone astray  
After the fruits and blossoms  
Scattered along their way.

Many an hour they'd loitered  
Carelessly on:—yet who,  
Seeing the path was rugged,  
Would not have loitered too?

Never a hand to check them,  
Never a smile to cheer;  
Shadowy memories only  
Filling the childish ear.



Once as they idly dallied,  
Scallop and staff thrown by,  
Over them dropt a whisper  
Out of the silent sky.

Up from their play they started,  
Wetted in haste their lips,  
Girded themselves for travel,  
Shouldered their scanty scrips;

Speeding as if belated  
Hurriedly on their way,  
Softly the younger asking,  
“What did our mother say?”

“‘*Knock and it shall be opened.*’  
Ah, if the whisper stirs  
*Both* of our hearts so,—surely,  
Surely the voice *was* hers!

“Cannot you mind her saying  
Stretching her arms to go,—  
‘I will be with you nearer,  
Oftener than you know?’

“‘Out of the skies I’ll call you,  
Tenderly leaning through;

—Listen, with faces, darlings,  
Lifted toward the blue.

“ ‘*Knock and it shall be opened,  
Seek and I know you’ll find :*  
These are the words I’ll whisper  
When you are left behind.’ ”

“ So,—I have heard her, brother,  
When we have tarried late,  
Calling us ‘little pilgrims,’  
Bidding us seek the gate ;

“ Telling us ’tis the pathway  
Out of this world of sin ;  
Yonder,—I see the wicket,  
Come, let us enter in.”

## TEMPLE-SERVICE.

### I.

I TURN to Thee!—My heart hath been  
A desecrated shrine,  
And on its holiest altar, where  
Should burn the flame divine,  
Strange fire consumed a sacrifice  
I made not wholly Thine.

### II.

I knelt with offerings in my hands,  
And ashes on my brow,  
While yet divided worship breathed  
In every prayer and vow;  
—To gods beyond the outer courts  
My soul had dared to bow.

### III.

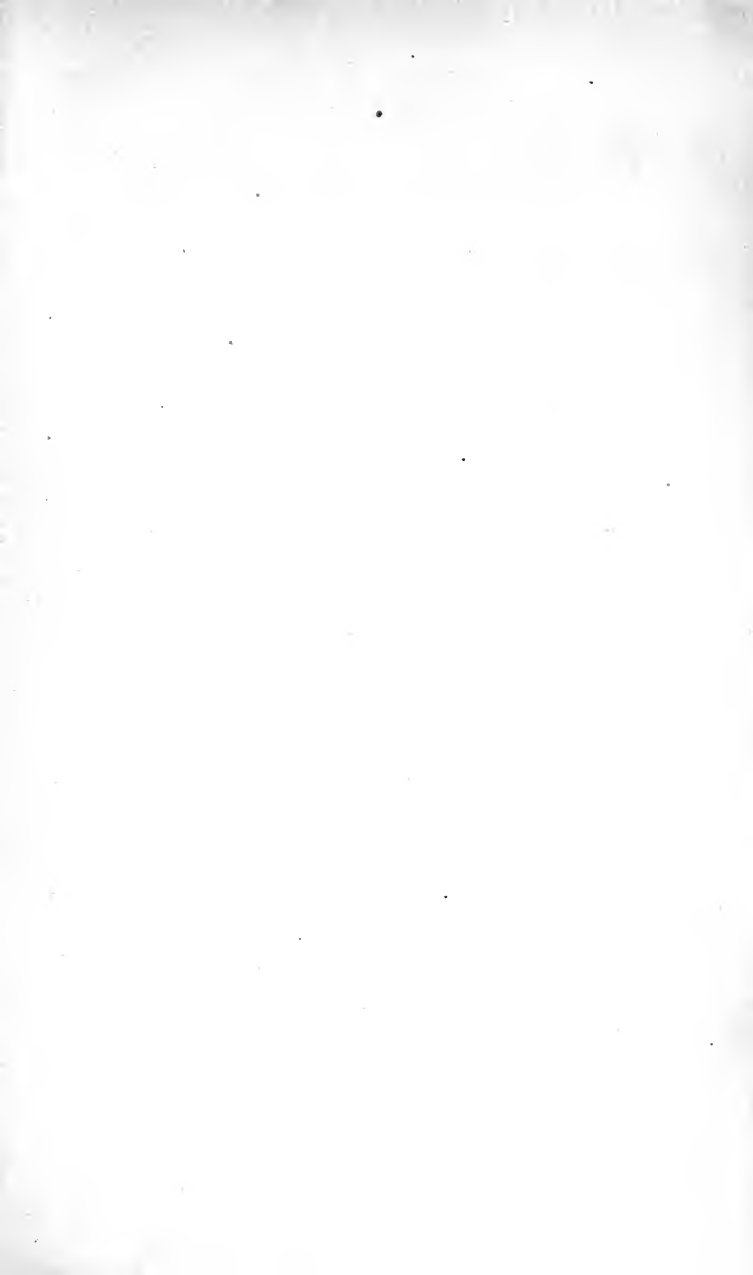
Cleanse Thou the temple, Great High Priest,  
Anoint its altar-stone;

The blood that wet Thy wounded hands,  
Can purge, restore, atone ;  
And be each pure oblation sealed  
Henceforth to God alone.

## IV.

Within Thy golden censer laid,  
Bear heavenward I implore,  
The bruis'd frankincense and the myrrh,  
The tears and prayers I pour ;  
Nor let irreverent rites profane  
Thy hallowed service more !







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